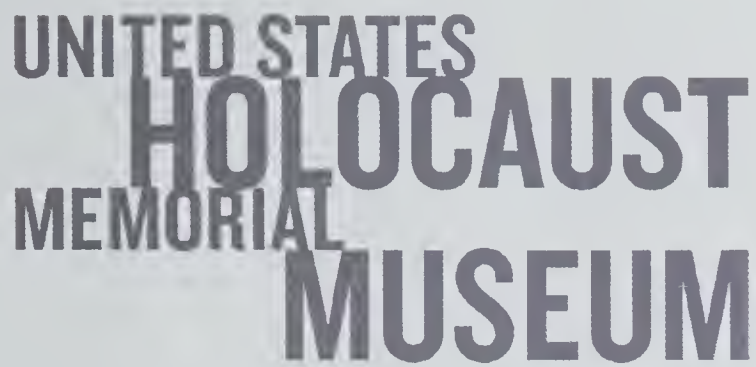




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*God Cried
at
Auschwitz*

*By
Betty Lissing*

*Edited By
Shula Roukin*

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SYNOPSIS

THE FIRST PART OF THE MANUSCRIPT COVERS THE EARLY LIVES OF A YOUNG JEWISH DUTCH COUPLE, BETTY AND HERMAN LISSING, BEFORE AND AFTER THE GERMAN INVASION OF THE NETHERLANDS. IT CONTINUES WITH DETAILS OF THE NAZI'S NOTORIOUS PLAN TO SYSTEMATICALLY EXTERMINATE THE JEWISH DUTCH POPULATION.

AFTER THE DEPORTATION OF BETTY'S FAMILY, SHE GOES INTO HIDING WITH HER NEW HUSBAND, HERMAN. THEY HOPE TO ESCAPE TO ENGLAND VIA BELGIUM.

HERMAN IS DISCOVERED, ARRESTED AND DEPORTED. BETTY'S ARREST FOLLOWS AND SHE TELLS THE SHOCKING STORY OF HER TWO YEAR'S IMPRISONMENT AND FORCED LABOUR IN CONCENTRATION CAMPS, UNTIL HER LIBERATION AT THE WAR'S END, AND HER MIRACULOUS REUNION WITH HERMAN.

THE STORY IS THEN TAKEN UP BY HERMAN, WHO RELATES HIS EXPERIENCES AND FREQUENT ESCAPES FROM WHAT SEEMS CERTAIN DEATH. AFTER LIBERATION HE RETURNS TO HOLLAND AND A JOYFUL REUNION WITH BETTY.

UNABLE TO SETTLE TO LIFE IN HOLLAND AFTER THE WAR, THE LISSINGS AND THEIR SMALL SON EMIGRATE TO AUSTRALIA.

BETTY AGAIN TAKES UP THE STORY, AND WRITES OF HER ADJUSTMENT TO THE NEW COUNTRY AND THE BIRTH OF HER SECOND SON IN SYDNEY. HER EMOTIONAL ADJUSTMENT TO LIFE AFTER HER WAR EXPERIENCES IS STILL PAINFULLY DIFFICULT AND SHE FINDS COMFORT IN THE JUST PUBLISHED DIARY OF ANNE FRANK.

THE BIRTH OF THE COUPLE'S THIRD CHILD, ELINDA, A DAUGHTER WITH DOWN'S SYNDROME, PRECIPITATES A NEW CRISIS. BETTY TELLS OF HER FIGHT AGAINST THE MEDICAL PROFESSION, FIRST TO SAVE HER CHILD'S LIFE, AND THEN TO ACHIEVE FOR ELINDA THE BEST POSSIBLE QUALITY OF LIFE.

IN HER EFFORTS SHE IS AIDED BY OTTO FRANK, ANNE FRANK'S FATHER. SHE ALSO MEETS THE TV PERSONALITY, ROGER CLIMPSON, WHO IS SO IMPRESSED BY HER STRUGGLES FOR HER DAUGHTER THAT HE WRITES THE BOOK, *ELINDA*.

BETTY THEN GOES ON TO REVEAL THE PHILOSOPHICAL AND SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT WHICH GROWS WITHIN HER, ALONGSIDE THE STRUGGLE FOR ELINDA'S LIFE AND HAPPINESS. SHE DEMONSTRATES HOW HER ADDED DIMENSION OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH HELP HER COME TO TERMS WITH NOT ONLY HER OWN SUFFERING, BUT THE ORDEALS OF SUFFERING HUMANITY.

BETTY'S SPIRITUAL STRENGTH ENABLE HER TO DEAL WITH THE GRIEF OF HERMAN'S PASSING IN 1991. SHE NOW LIVES IN PEACE AND HARMONY WITH LIFE AS SHE WATCHES NEW FAMILY GENERATIONS GROW.

SHE CONCLUDES WITH AN EPILOGUE WHICH GIVES HER PERSONAL REASONS FOR FINALLY PUTTING INTO WORDS HER WHOLE STORY FOR ALL TO READ.

GOD CRIED AT AUSCHWITZ
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FOREWORD

It has taken more than fifty years since my liberation from the hell of Auschwitz, when it came to me in a shock realisation that indeed God cried at Auschwitz.

As a survivor of the Holocaust the question most frequently put to me is: 'Where was God at Auschwitz?' How, if there is a God, could He have tolerated death camps and allow slaughter of millions of innocent people, their lives snuffed out by the murderous rampage of the Nazi regime?

Even the victims, while on their last journey, could not comprehend the enormity of the crime that was about to destroy them. When they came face to face with the final annihilation of their existence on this earth, it was too late for mothers to save their children, husbands to save their wives, or children to save their parents, from a gruesome death.

To me, as a survivor of Auschwitz, it still remains a mystery how this murderous plan for total destruction of an entire people, simply because of their heritage in the Jewish faith, could be carried out.

I was born and raised in the Netherlands. So was my entire family, which can be traced back for over three hundred years in the Netherlands. I had the good fortune to be born into a civilised and cultured society that respected the right to be whatever individuals practised, provided they did not infringe on the right of others to practise their way of life.

On May 10, 1940, our peace loving intent was violated. The Germans, like thieves in the night, invaded the Netherlands, in order to practise their desire to teach us their grotesque plan for race purification.

It did not take long for the population to descend into decline when the occupation plundered and looted the country's possessions and food supply, and put people into slave labour camps both in Holland and Germany. However, for the Jewish population, they had different plans. These resulted in the deportation of 105,000 Jewish people. Less than 5000 returned from the death camps. The rest were eliminated, among them my entire family.

The Gypsy people living in the Netherlands, were also deemed to be inferior. They too were deported to Auschwitz for destruction.

The madness that motivated racists to act in such an abhorrent manner, still baffles the human mind. In the process of so-called race purification, millions of Germans lost their lives.

Today we know the so-called invincible leaders of that regime put a bullet through their brains, or took poison as the Allied Forces marched on Berlin. They even murdered their own wives and children when defeat was certain.

Over the long years since the liberation, I heard all sorts of theories as to why the Jewish people were singled out for the treatment of persecution and destruction. The most infamous one seems to be that they did not accept Jesus Christ as God.

That theory does not stand. In reality, millions of European Christians were killed in the same war, in spite of their Christian faith in Jesus Christ as God.

I have since learned that something deeper must be realised by humanity at large and that is this: unless we acknowledge the one Fatherhood of God for all people, we have no common cause for being on earth and fulfilling our destiny of the brotherhood of man. There is no God enthroned in the sky or hanging on a cross.

God resides in man in His fullness, but man has to make that connection and acknowledge it, for Him to function in our individual lives.

So God is present at all times within man. We have the choice to exercise our free will to ignore or accept God within us, in accordance with our own beliefs.

I now know that God was present at Auschwitz, and when man exercised his destructive free will at Auschwitz, God indeed cried.

Betty Lissing

March 1997.

Sydney Australia.

PART ONE

CHAPTER ONE

OUR FATE IS SEALED

It is difficult to explain why I burst into tears when my father told us that war had broken out. I was only 17 years old at that time and had always had the best of life, so the only way I can explain it now is that I must have had certain premonitions of what was to happen to all of us at home.

Often when I reflect on my childhood, I think of the afternoon when I came home from school to find my parents huddled before the radio in our living room. There was ^A sense of nervous anticipation. I felt that they were waiting for something important, but I had no idea what it was.

One look at their faces made me stop. I waited for them to tell me what they were expecting to hear.

Suddenly my father's face turned ashen. The radio commentator announced that Hitler had swept to power in Germany.

I knew nothing about politics, but it was as if an iron fist clamped around my heart. The whole room felt cold.

It was 1933 and I was ten years old.

I overheard my family discussing the issues, but when children were present they made light of the situation in Germany.

There was an immediate exodus of Jews and political opponents of the Nazis from Germany. My grandparents opened their home to refugees. For a number of years there was an on-going stream of people fleeing Hitler's regime.

Most Dutch people did not expect the Germans to invade the Netherlands. Holland had remained neutral during World War I and had no intention of becoming involved in another war.

Nevertheless, there was a sense of foreboding in the air whenever political news was discussed, or when programs against the Jewish people were reported in the newspapers.

Being very young I did not dwell on such matters. But I could not shake off the feeling of doom that overtook me when I had seen the expression on my parents' faces as they listened to the announcement of Hitler's victorious *putz* into government.

It was the 10th of May - 1942. A.M.D.

Holland's avowed neutrality did not prevent the Germans from invading our small country and bombing our cities into surrender. The Dutch people were in a state of shock. The government went into exile in England. The Royal Family also fled to England, where Queen Wilhemina stayed throughout the entire war.

It took the Germans only 4 days to overrun the Netherlands.

The Dutch population was trapped between the North Sea and German Occupied Europe. Gradually the Nazis introduced slave labour, and most young Dutchmen were taken from their homes and transported to Germany.

1. The first part of the document is a letter from the President of the United States to the Congress.

2. The second part is a report from the Secretary of the Treasury on the state of the Union.

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The struggle to live a free life was great and the general population suffered severe hardship.

But it was the annihilation of its Jewish population that most shook the nation after the war, when the final murderous count was revealed.

Mother was only 42 and Father two years older, when Hitler's Germany invaded our well cultured fatherland. My elder brother Maurits, was 19 years old, and Louis, whom we called our 'little brother,' was only 11 years old. We were a happy, average family, by no means rich, but we were never short of anything necessary in our neat, orderly life.

I was always a sportsgirl at heart. From the age of ten I belonged to a well-known gymnastic club in Amsterdam named Bato. I spent all my free time practising my skills. I was told I was a natural gymnast, but to me it was my great love.

I went on to win the yearly club championship for the next five years, and at fifteen I was included in the national team. The coach was the famous Gerrit Kleerekoper, a greatly respected identity. Every morning Holland awoke to his fitness programme on the radio.

I think with gratitude of these years of sportsmanship. My youth was a happy one of joy and fellowship. I am convinced within myself that my years of training in fitness and discipline helped to prepare my body to endure the incredible hardships of the war years.

Sadly, not all the Bato gymnasts were so fortunate. When the war was over, three-quarters of its members had perished.

After German occupation, my very patriotic mother decided we must try to resist as much as possible. That was easier said than done. Being Jews made it all even more difficult. Immediately after the capitulation, decree after decree forced restriction after restriction upon us.

Life grew more and more perilous every passing day.

Going to the movies, riding in trams or on bicycles, driving in cars, was prohibited to us. We were forced to leave our clubs and friends, as Jews and Christians were not allowed to associate with each other.

All this was part of the Nazi plan to isolate the Jewish people from the general population.

At first the Germans tried to get the Dutch population on their side but they failed. Due to the efforts of the underground movements, there was never so much as a chance that they would succeed. When the Nazi propaganda against Jews did not work, the Germans showed their real face and the firing squad was almost constantly at work.

Soon afterwards I met my future husband, Herman Lissing. At that time he had just become involved in the underground Resistance. I can still remember an afternoon when we were all sitting around the table waiting for him to return home after monitoring the news from England.

His face was grim when he arrived. Finally he told us about the English radio broadcast. It revealed that all Jews already been deported to Germany were almost certain to be gassed or otherwise murdered.

What to do? Where to go?

We did not know. There seemed no way out. Although the underground organisations tried to help as much as they could, it was still an impossibility to keep all Jews in hiding. The much feared *Grüne Polizei* (Green Police), an especially brutal Nazi force, constantly raided streets and houses. And when found, not only the people in hiding were either shot or deported, but also anybody who had assisted them.

Mother was the only one who did not show any fear. She often said, 'All we can do is to pretend not to care. I would much rather be dead than show them our fear.'

We often had to keep her away from the open windows whenever the Nazi men marched in the streets, singing how they would kill everybody who was against *Das Reich*. Whenever she had a chance to do so, she would call out, 'Fatherland traitors and murderers.'

We had to plead with her to think of us, as we could all have been shot on the spot. That would not have gained anything. We said, 'We should only want to live for the liberation and see them go down the gutter.' This usually calmed her down, but to this day I am convinced she would gladly have been shot if only she could have given them 'a piece of her mind.'

Soon a notice was issued that we had to wear the yellow Star of David, and the first deportations began. There was terrible panic everywhere. Mothers saw their children being taken away, and children were forced to watch their parents being arrested at gunpoint.

My fiancé would not wait to be either shot or deported. He decided we had better get married at once. Then, with the help of the agents of the underground, Herman planned for us to escape along the Belgian, French and Spanish borders to England and so be able to fight against Nazi Germany.

We applied for our marriage licence at the Registry Office. Under the new Nazi rules, the licence could not be issued until a certain number of Jewish couples had applied. Four weeks later, we received notice that our marriage could probably take place on the 1st of April, 1942. Until 31st of March, we had no definite assurance that our wedding could proceed.

Of course, a synagogue wedding was impossible, and in addition Jews were not allowed to marry at the Registry Office. But a former theatre was being used as a Jewish party place, and Jewish civil weddings were performed there.

Even on the day of our wedding, we were not sure whether we would get married, as the Nazis often raided places where they suspected the Jews were gathering together.

We had to walk the whole distance as no form of transport was available for us. When we arrived at the theatre, we were astonished to see the place filled with people. There were twenty-five couples waiting to get married. We were seated

in rows in the theatre, some couples by themselves, others accompanied by family.

A civil servant acted as celebrant. He stood on stage, and called out the names of each couple to be wed. Thus we were all married in a mass ceremony.

When we came home mother had a lovely lunch for all of us. Although food was scarce, the family had brought what they could - fresh fish, salads and home-made cake - and we tried to act as if it was a real wedding day.

It was the last time that our whole family was together, and I am forever grateful that we shared that day with all those we loved. Soon afterwards the first members of our family were taken away and deported.

Over the years, Herman and I often talked about our wedding day, for there was a lot of sadness because of the ridiculous regulations that were imposed upon us. After the war we met two people who had actually been married in the same ceremony. So few people had survived, and it was unusual for both members of a couple to escape with their lives.

During the war years we lost all our possessions, including photographs. However, Herman had an aunt by marriage who was not Jewish, and she was able to keep copies of some of our cherished photographs of our family and our wedding day.

Life under the Nazis was made as difficult as possible. Everyone had an identity card. The Jews had a *J* inserted on the front page next to the photograph.

For those people conscripted to work for the *Wermacht* (German Army), the Nazis placed a *sperre* on their cards, an indication of the trade or profession of the bearer. This stamp lulled such people into believing that they were safe from deportation.

Then, without warning, the Nazis would declare that the *sperre* of one particular trade, for example workers in a clothing factory, was invalid, and all persons with that particular *sperre* on their card were deported.

Jews were not allowed to leave their homes between eight in the evening and six in the morning. During those hours the Nazi police would come, break down doors, and force their victims into trucks, driving them to the Westerbork transit concentration camp, before deporting them to the gas chambers in Poland and Germany.

The homes of people deported to their death were sealed up by the SS. Just a few days later their furniture and belongings, the things people worked for many years to attain, were loaded into trucks and sent to Germany. The firm in charge of this operation was called *Puls*.

I will never forget that name. Those robbers profited from the destruction of innocent citizens. A vile crime.

Herman and I waited, delaying our escape attempt, because I could not bear to leave my family.

Then one morning Maurits, my elder brother, came to our apartment. When I saw his face I knew what had happened. The Nazis had come the night before and had taken my parents and brothers away. Because Maurits worked in the diamond trade, and that *sperre* was still valid, he was released.

When the Nazis police came to arrest my parents and brothers, they were given only a few minutes to collect some personal belongings to take with them. It was November the 10th, 1942, my father's forty-sixth birthday.

The police kept telling them, 'Hurry up, we don't have time.' Mother slowly turned, faced the Nazi police and said she was not afraid to die. She would not change places with them, as they would never ever in their lives find peace with so much blood on their hands.

What affected us most was that while they were standing in the truck, our little brother, Louis, who had acted as though he did not care, pressed close to Maurits and whispered, 'Please don't tell Mummy, but I'm so scared. I don't think they will let us live.'

I can still say this, that even with what happened to me later, it was the worst moment of my life. I instantly felt that I would never see my dear family again.

When my brother Maurits was released he was inconsolable, because he had been separated from the rest of the family. Following the usual Nazi procedure, my parents' home was sealed, but Maurits was given a permit to enter under supervision and collect some of his belongings. Nothing else could be touched.

Personal possessions like furniture, clothing and photographs had to be left behind. All of it was lost forever.

We were allowed to go with Maurits.

In the kitchen, the food was still on the stove. On the sideboard was a home-made birthday cake for my father.

The tears streamed down my face. All I could say was, 'Now I have lost my mother.'

If I had not been so young, I think the shock would have killed me, as I then thought that my life had ended.

The whole of my mother's family were deported to Poland. In all, five of her brothers and sisters, with their children, were captured at gunpoint.

Grandfather was 67 years old in 1942. He was one of the first to be taken.

Meanwhile, my brother Maurits came to live with us, but after two months the Nazis came and took him away. Now Herman and I were completely alone.

Herman then received notice that he must register himself as all former Dutch Air Force officers had to do.

We decided we could not wait any longer. With the help of the underground, we set out for the Belgian border.

I knew our escape to foreign countries was to be a dangerous journey but nothing could keep us from taking this risk. The only alternative we had was to wait until the Nazi police would come to the house and arrest us and we knew what that would mean in regard to our freedom and our life.

So we chose to take the risk of being on the run and possibly making it into a free country, to escape the Nazi plan for our destruction.

So when the opportunity arose for us to set our plan in motion, we had to go ahead. The fact that by now all our loved ones had been taken away gave us the incentive to at least try to stay out of the Nazi's clutches.

This had been, from the beginning of the German invasion into our country, the inner urge, to survive the onslaught and to report what really took place while under the heel of the Nazi machine of destruction. Herman had been informed by the resistance, he could report, as all his Airforce officer friends were required to do, to be moved to a German P.O.W. camp and could perhaps survive the war in doing so.

However, he found, that I would still be moved to a concentration camp in Poland and he felt that the risk was too great.

CHAPTER TWO

INTO HIDING

Before we could make a move to cross the border into Belgium, we had to go into hiding, as the Gestapo constantly raided houses in order to deport people to the death camps.

An underground agent by the name of Jo Panke had arranged for us to get false identity papers without the compulsory *J* stamped on the front page.

This *J* identified any Jew, whether caught escaping, or when there was a round-up of people on the streets, something that happened daily.

The next experience, for Herman and myself, was so nerve racking that even to this day, I do not know how we survived that ordeal.

Jo Panke gave us one hour to pack a small suitcase and leave the house. He told us to take off the Star of David we had to wear, and meet him in front of a building in a well-known city street.

When we arrived Jo gave us a letter, and ordered us to go into a building. The letter was to be handed to a man whose name I have forgotten.

As we approached the entrance of the building Herman and I almost froze on the spot. The Nazi flag with its swastika was draped across the entrance, over which the words COMMAND POST were prominently displayed.

It was too late to turn back.

We looked at each other and became convinced we had been denounced or fallen into a trap.

Outwardly we remained calm as we handed our letter to the doorman.

Without a word he took us to a desk where an officer in a Nazi uniform was seated. He told us to sit down, and asked me for my identity card. He spoke in Dutch. He asked me to follow him into a side room where he took a photograph of me.

He was silent till he finished, when he said, 'Go back to the desk. I will be there soon.'

When I rejoined Herman, he looked at me, his eyes asking, 'What happened out there?' There was no way I could reply.

It is impossible to describe how I felt while waiting. My thoughts were whirling round and round. I kept telling myself, 'Steady. Keep focussed. Be Calm. Everything depends on that.'

When the man in Nazi uniform came back, he asked Herman for his identity card. Herman was very blonde, not at all the Nazi idea of a Jewish type. No new photograph of him was needed.

After what seemed to be hours, he returned and gave me an entirely new identity card. From being Betty Lissing, née Wynschenk, I was now Annie Keiser.

4. The fourth part of the document discusses the implications of the findings. It highlights the potential applications of the research in various fields and the need for further investigation in this area.

5. The fifth part of the document concludes the study. It summarizes the key findings and provides a final statement on the significance of the research. The authors express their gratitude to the funding agency and the participants.

6. The sixth part of the document includes a list of references. It cites the works of other researchers in the field, providing a context for the current study. The references are listed in alphabetical order.

7. The seventh part of the document contains a list of appendices. It includes additional data, figures, and tables that are not included in the main text. The appendices are labeled with letters and numbers.

8. The eighth part of the document is a list of figures. It includes a series of graphs and charts that illustrate the data presented in the study. The figures are labeled with letters and numbers.

9. The ninth part of the document is a list of tables. It includes a series of tables that present the data in a structured format. The tables are labeled with letters and numbers.

10. The tenth part of the document is a list of footnotes. It includes additional information and references that are not included in the main text. The footnotes are labeled with letters and numbers.

Herman had his original identity card returned to him. The man had very skilfully removed the *J* from beside his picture. He was still Herman Lissing, but not a Jew by identity.

The officer stood up and ushered us out.

When we walked out of the building, we saw Jo waiting for us across the street. We were still stunned by the experience at the Gestapo office, but Jo explained that the officer who had given us new identity cards was a Resistance worker.

He handed us an address in the western part of Amsterdam. Herman knew the name of the man, as he was an employee at his former workplace.

We were told to take the tram to the home of Herman and Margeret Jukkers.

That was also risky, as we had not been able to use public transport for the last couple of years. We boarded the tram and someone said, 'Hello Herman, where are you off to?' This man, whom Herman had known for a number of years, did not appear to think it odd to see him, and made no allusion to the fact that Herman was Jewish. Perhaps he just pretended to forget.

But we got off the tram a short distance from the Jukkers home just to be on the safe side, and walked the rest of the way.

When we arrived we were greeted with open arms. These simple people had put their lives on the line by putting us up. If found out, they would be shot.

We had to wait there for about three weeks, until our passage to Belgium was arranged in conjunction with the Belgian resistance group called *La Brigade Blanche* (The White Brigade).

Those three weeks were extremely hazardous. The Jukkers had told their neighbours that we were cousins from another part of the country, but suspicions were aroused. Local people wanted to know more, especially exactly which town we had come from.

We could not afford to be caught out in any contradictions. The Jukkers, Herman and I went through many rehearsals to make sure our stories matched.

One morning when I was alone in the house, there was a knock at the door.

I opened it and there stood a big police officer, not an ordinary policeman but a uniformed District Inspector.

My heart was beating fast as I asked, 'What can I do for you.'

He said, 'The people next door put in a complaint. Some of the rabbits they kept in cages have disappeared. We are searching surrounding homes.'

I pretended to be amused and said, 'Go right ahead and look over the place.'

Inside I was really terrified. Suppose our protectors or Herman might come back and lose their cool at the sight of the policeman.

The Inspector looked around and said, 'Thank you. They are certainly not here, unless you have eaten them already.'

During the whole time in that village we were in constant fear of the locals and their suspicions. Would they go to the police, and give up the Jukkers and ourselves to the Nazis? All our lives were on the line.

Food was very scarce but the Jukkers shared whatever they could buy with us.

Every day that we could extend our freedom was of the utmost importance. After the war we discovered just how vital that extra time was for us. Practically none of the prisoners sent to Auschwitz in the early transports survived.

We were given the go ahead to leave Holland on Whitsunday, 1943. It was assumed that to travel on a holiday weekend was safer for us. When we said goodbye to the Jukkers family we were both in tears.

The plan was to take the train to the village of Lage-Mierde in the province of Brabant, on the Belgian border, where the Panke family lived on a farm. Jo would be waiting for us with bicycles at the last stop. From there it would take about half an hour to reach the farm.

Herman and I entered the central station in the heart of Amsterdam on Saturday morning of the holiday weekend.

No sooner had we joined the queue for tickets, when the Gestapo police, with drawn guns, raided the station and blocked all entrances and exits.

Panic broke out. There were the usual threats and shouting by the SS officers. People were made to stand in line with their identity cards ready for inspection. Herman and I remained in control of our panic. We tried to behave like holiday makers, looking almost nonchalant as, one by one, the crowd filed past the police.

Then It was my turn.

The SS officer looked at me, held up my identity card, and nodded to me to proceed.

Herman was next, and that was the real test as his card had been tampered with at Gestapo headquarters.

The officer took his card, held it up to the light, looked at him, looked at the card again, and then nodded him on.

We ran to the waiting train shaking like leaves, but smiling outwardly.

The train was filled with German soldiers, who travelled all over Holland. We blocked out all fear, because one wrong move on our part would give us away. It took about three hours to arrive at our destination. Jo was waiting for us as promised, with the bicycles.

We had to wait three days at the Panke farm for Guus Willense, a gendarme with the Belgian police. Guus was a member of the *Brigade Blanche*. He would supply us with false Belgian papers and guide us over the border into Belgium.

We peddled to the Panke farm, where we were received with kindness and a good meal.

The village where the Panke family lived is called Lage Mierde. It is close to the Belgian border. The population, mostly farmers, were staunch Catholics. It was a close knit community, where everyone knew everyone else. Being Whitsunday, church services were well attended.

Jo told us we should go to church with his family, so as not to appear different. This we agreed to do. It was a new experience for us, but no one seemed suspicious, as we fitted in with the congregation. I don't know if the villagers knew why we were there. They did not ask any questions. But when we left Lage Mierde three days later, most of the people came out and waved us off saying, 'God bless you.'

It was late afternoon when we met Guus, and we prepared to cross the border.

Herman, Jo and Guus each rode a bicycle. I rode on the luggage seat of Jo's bicycle. Of course we could not risk a light, so we made our way in darkness. No one spoke.

The woods were so very dense that we often had to walk. But there was danger in the open spaces. The Germans had guards with dogs all over the place, as well as powerful searchlights. To remain unseen, we often had to crawl on our bellies, dragging the bicycles after us. If anyone was sighted in the woods, the Germans would shoot without bothering to ask questions.

Our destination was the border village of Weelde in Belgium, where Guus lived with his parents, It was only about thirty kilometres from the Panke farm, but getting there seemed to be an endless trek.

Rain was pelting into our faces. Twigs and branches from the trees cut and scratched us. We hardly noticed. We were concentrating intensely on getting across the border.

We could see the searchlights and hear voices shouting in the distance, but the heavy rain and the darkness actually assisted us to remain unnoticed.

Suddenly we were beyond the trees and came onto an open paddock. The ground was very muddy so we had to walk slowly beside our bicycles. After what seemed to be hours, we saw a farm with lights shining from the windows. It was an immense relief to hear Guus say, 'Yes, that is our house. We have made it.'

Again we were received with kindness and a meal. After a hot bath, we went to sleep in the barn.

Early next morning, after a good breakfast, we thanked the Willemse family for their kindness and set out on our bicycles, pretending to be holiday makers enjoying a ride in the country.

In the village of Weelde, was a hotel where we had to wait to be handed our Belgian identity cards. Without these it would be impossible to travel through Belgium. The lounge of the hotel was filled with German soldiers waiting to board a train to their destination.

There were also some locals drinking beer, and they stared at us curiously as not many strangers came to the this hotel. Herman noticed the piano, and asked the owner if he could play it, saying he was a musician on his way to an engagement in Brussels.

It did not take long before everyone was singing along with the music. I stared at Herman in amazement, and he winked at me. He later told me it was better to act brazenly and carry on.

When Jo Panke finally appeared in the hotel lounge with the false papers hidden in his pocket, he could not believe his eyes and ears. He had landed in the middle of a singalong.

I was really shaking inwardly, but Herman seemed totally at ease, and smiled when the soldiers applauded.

After dinner, Jo gave us our passports. We became Maria and Herman Machielse, from Lembekke, Belgium.

Guus and Jo took us to the station, settled us in a compartment and said goodbye. We had a contact address in Brussels, which was to be used only in an emergency.

So Herman and I were on our own, and going to an unknown destination. Fortunately we both spoke the local Flemish dialect. Without that language we could not hope to remain inconspicuous. And in a big city like Brussels we thought we had more chance of not being found.

However, when we arrived we discovered that our contact man had been arrested so we had to stay in Brussels longer than we had hoped.

We had very little money, but because Herman was a musician he found work in a bar playing the piano. I did not go out any more than strictly necessary. For Herman it was easier. Musicians, working late hours, were given special passes which allowed them to be out after curfew. Herman spoke French as well as English and German. So he started working for the Belgian underground by carrying messages all over the city.

One afternoon he was arrested by the German police, who had followed him all day.

When I received word of his arrest, the Resistance immediately advised me to leave the house where I had a room, and keep on the move till further notice. Just in case Herman would be forced to reveal where I was living, I had to stay out of easy reach of the Nazis.

I moved from room to room and one night slept on a park bench. At last I received the all clear from the contact man. Herman had been moved to the transit camp of Malines for deportation to Poland.

I went back to the boarding house where we had been staying. Jo Panke came to see me and gave me some money.

Shortly after Jo Panke himself was arrested.

That was another crisis. It was very difficult to be alone in a new country, and I badly needed support.

To be alone with no means of earning a living, was a frightening prospect. It was too dangerous to try to get work without revealing who I was. I lived only one day at a time, and dared not even contemplate the future.

In order to attempt to persuade Jews in occupied countries that their affairs would be taken care of, special Jewish Councils were set up by the Nazis. Their chief function was to pacify Jews who were to be deported. With their help, I was able to send Herman some food parcels and some letters.

Herman's arrest had taken place on August 10th, 1943. He stayed at Malines Transit Camp until he was deported to Auschwitz in September, 1943. He had always told me that he would try to escape if he was ever caught and deported. I hoped and prayed that he would succeed.

After liberation he told me he had tried to escape, but the wagons in his transport were too heavily guarded by the SS. This was because the transport before had been ambushed by the Belgian Resistance. People broke out while the trains were still travelling through Belgium. Many escapees were shot, but a few managed to stay in hiding.

I struggled on alone for about six weeks. Fortunately, I spoke a little French, and managed to buy food at the local shops.

Early one morning, on the 25th of September, 1943, I heard loud voices in the house, and a lot of shouting, and I knew I was in trouble.

I stayed hidden in my room when suddenly the door was pushed open and two Gestapo officers armed with revolvers burst into the room and demanded my identity papers.

All the occupants of the house were arrested, and we were taken to the Gestapo prison in Avenue Louise. This prison had a gruesome reputation, and was very much feared because prisoners were brutally beaten and tortured until they confessed why they were in hiding; whether they were Jews or political opponents of the Nazis.

At the prison I was interrogated by two SS officers. They had rung Lembekke to verify my identity. Of course there was no evidence of a Maria Machielse.

They knew I was Jewish. They shouted and threatened me.

I did not say a word.

Suddenly one of the officers turned to me, lowered his voice and said, 'You are beautiful, and you don't have to be deported, if you will reveal the names of others in hiding.'

I remained silent.

'We have no choice but to deport you.'

From Avenue Louise I was taken to St. Gilles prison. After three days I was put on a truck with other prisoners and taken to Malines transit camp, where I remained for about three months.

Malines was an old military barracks complex, and the guards were Flemish fascists and German police. Prisoners were confined until there were sufficient numbers to make up a transport to Poland.

Life in Malines was bearable, as the Brussels Jewish Council was allowed to supply the prisoners with food.

This again was a psychological ploy by the Nazis. Allowing the Jewish Council to function as a benefactor lulled free members of the community into a sense of security. Then very swiftly and without warning yet another building would be seized and all occupants arrested and deported.

At Malines men, women and children lived and slept on wooden boards in long dormitories.

Inspections by German guards went on each day, and we prisoners lived in constant dread that at any moment we would be deported.

Then one morning we were ordered to line up with the little clothing that we had with us. We were led out of the camp, under police guard, to a ramp where cattle trucks were waiting.

The sick, the frail, men, women and children were pushed and forced into the trucks, eighty persons to a wagon.

There was no food or water. The only facility was a bucket in a corner. The doors were closed and it was pitch dark inside.

Packed into the wagon was a cross-section of the general community. There were lawyers, university professors, famous musicians and everyday decent workers with their children. Hitler made no distinction between us.

Every person in those cattle cars was marked for extermination.

If one had some doubt before entering the wagon, that this was a journey to death, the horror of that ride left no doubt about the outcome.

The worst part was the suffering of the children and their mothers. Children were crying for food, and mothers had nothing to give them.

On the last day of the journey most people were resigned to their fate. They expected the worst to happen.

And it did.

Such vile treatment made us feel doomed. In despair we tried to comfort each other, especially the children who were crying.

I particularly remember a little redheaded girl of 9. I am sure she must have felt the end near, because she could not speak and would not listen when I tried to comfort her. With her eyes wide open she cried and cried all the time.

CHAPTER THREE

ARRIVAL IN AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU

After three days of no water, food, light or fresh air, we arrived in Auschwitz-Birkenau on a railroad siding.

The doors opened and there was shouting everywhere to get out onto the ramp.

As we stumbled out of the train we were told to leave our personal belongings as they would be brought into the camps by the prison guards. Of course that did not happen. We never saw our things again.

Everywhere there were SS officers with whips and dogs at their sides. They shouted, 'Men to the left, women to the right.'

At the end of the ramp were army trucks with the Red Cross painted on them. Over the loud speaker a voice screamed that mothers and children must go on the trucks, as well as anyone who was old or tired.

I had travelled from the Malines transit camp in Belgium with a Dutch family. The father had to leave his wife and 17 year old daughter, and stand with the other men on the left side of the platform.

We women had to file past a group of SS officers, one of whom became familiar to almost every woman in the camp. He was Dr Mengele. (His infamy has been well documented. As I was never chosen for medical experiments, I had no personal contact with him.)

When the Dutch mother filed past, one of the officers told her to go on the truck. Her beautiful daughter asked to go with her mother, and the officer said 'Yes'. I wanted to stay with my friends and asked if I could go with them.

In answer the officer raised his whip struck me across the head and pushed me away from them.

I saw the little red haired girl, her mother and grandmother walking away to get on the truck. As the trucks moved off, I was marched away with eighty other young women and girls.

After ten minutes we entered Auschwitz-Birkenau *Womenslager* (Women's Camp). Over the entrance, in large letters, was a sign which announced *Arbeit Macht Frei* (Work makes free.)

We were marched into a so-called bathroom, and there the prison guards ordered us to take off all our clothes. We also had to hand over wedding rings and whatever else the Belgian prison officials had forgotten to steal.

Our hair was shaved off and a number tattooed on our arms.

Then we were handed the filthiest, bloodstained, bug ridden prison clothes. No underwear or stockings were provided because, as the guards casually told us, we would have no need for them, because nobody would come out alive. We would certainly be gassed or otherwise murdered.

When I asked one of the women guards if I would again meet my friends who had been put on the trucks, she told me point blank that they were just then being gassed and burned. Through a little window in the bathroom, she showed me the flames and fumes coming out of the crematorium.

I stared at her and thought she must have gone mad, but she gave me the facts straight.

None of us would survive. Already millions of prisoners, from all German occupied countries, had been gassed or murdered.

'Don't think,' she said, 'you will come out because you have been saved on arrival. If you don't go immediately to the gas chamber in the camp, it's even worse. There is no water, no food. There is typhoid and cholera, and under camp conditions you will not be able to survive anyway.'

I asked her about all the Dutch people who had been deported. They died quickest she said. I later realised that because they had never endured any hardships, they were least of all prepared.

So it was true. Mother, father, brothers, relatives and friends, they were all dead, and I was sure Herman must have died too.

Dear God, I prayed, I need more courage, because I cannot take it. I would rather die now than go through it all with no will to live.

For three days I could not speak or utter a sound.

We were kept in the bathroom for 24 hours, and then we were marched through the snow covered camp into the quarantine block.

The stench of burning bodies in the gas chambers was everywhere.

There was nothing but wooden boards on which to sleep, six of us to one board, with one filthy, bug ridden blanket between us.

We could not stretch out but had to sleep in a crouched position as the boards only measured about 6 feet by 2 feet.

'I have landed in Dante's Inferno,' I remember thinking. 'It really exists and this is the place.'

The next morning we were whipped over the heads by our warders. The warders or *Kapo* as they were called, were also prisoners, but because they could control large groups of other prisoners, mainly through brutality, they were in a better position. It was the Kapos who distributed food to each prisoner.

Shivering with fright, cold and hunger, we stood in line outside in a temperature well below zero. Dressed in rags we were soon covered in snow. After what seemed to be all day (it was about three hours) we were again marched to the so-called bathroom, as the doctor wanted to look us over.

That was a good laugh. We were stumbling over dead and dying bodies, consisting of nothing but skin and bone, and the doctor wanted to look us over!

When we finally reached the bathroom, we could hear terrible screams and cries coming from other prisoners who tried to resist going into the bathroom.

And we soon found out why.

We again had to undress, pass in single file before so-called doctors, in reality SS officers, who stood with pencil and paper in hand. Every so often they took down the number on a victim's arm.

That person was sentenced to death.

We were then ordered to get dressed and march on.

Sitting here thinking about it makes me perspire all over again. This is one of the memories I will have to live with for the rest of my life.

But I also wonder about all those soldiers, SS officers and warders, who actively helped to murder millions of people, for no other reason than being born Jewish. I wonder how they sleep with such crimes on their consciences, if any.

We were marched back to our block and locked in.

That night we were each given a small *schutssel* (wooden bowl) with a meagre portion of watery soup. After five days of no food or water, it tasted very good. That bowl was the most important item for any prisoner. Without the *schutssel*, no one would receive any liquid food. If it was lost or stolen, it would not be replaced.

1. The first part of the document is a letter from the President of the United States to the Congress, dated January 3, 1801. It is a very important document, as it is the first time that the President has addressed the Congress since the establishment of the office.

2. The second part of the document is a report from the Secretary of the Treasury, dated January 10, 1801. It contains information about the state of the Treasury and the finances of the United States.

3. The third part of the document is a report from the Secretary of the Navy, dated January 10, 1801. It contains information about the state of the Navy and the ships of the United States.

4. The fourth part of the document is a report from the Secretary of the War, dated January 10, 1801. It contains information about the state of the War and the troops of the United States.

5. The fifth part of the document is a report from the Secretary of the Interior, dated January 10, 1801. It contains information about the state of the Interior and the lands of the United States.

6. The sixth part of the document is a report from the Secretary of the Post Office, dated January 10, 1801. It contains information about the state of the Post Office and the mail of the United States.

7. The seventh part of the document is a report from the Secretary of the Education, dated January 10, 1801. It contains information about the state of the Education and the schools of the United States.

8. The eighth part of the document is a report from the Secretary of the Agriculture, dated January 10, 1801. It contains information about the state of the Agriculture and the farms of the United States.

9. The ninth part of the document is a report from the Secretary of the Commerce, dated January 10, 1801. It contains information about the state of the Commerce and the trade of the United States.

In the evening the doors of the huts were pushed open and a number of SS officers with lists in their hands entered. The Kapo was called to the entrance and all prisoners who had had their numbers taken earlier were called out. There was panic and screams broke out.

The condemned women tried to hide in the huts. But there was nowhere to go. At gun point they were pushed into the open carts. I have never forgotten the sight of these struggling young girls, trying to hang on to the door posts of the huts.

The cries for help slowly stopped as they were driven away to the gas chambers.

At first it became very tempting to give in to the wish to die rather than struggle to hang on under those conditions.

But my inner drive for survival was so strong that I could not give up the will to live. I later realised that to remain alive in Auschwitz was a form of resistance.

I witnessed a special transport of 600 young, healthy Dutch girls (my sister-in-law was one of them) arriving at the camp. They were immediately put to work without 'selection.' When they became aware of the horrors of Auschwitz they lost the will to live. Within weeks there were only eight of these girls still living. They just gave up and succumbed to death as a way out of their misery.

During the next four weeks, we carried bricks from one end of the camp to the other, for no other reason but to keep us busy.

Then we were again marched to the bathroom, and had to pass in single file again before the SS officers. One of them pulled me out of the line, and wrote down my number. This happened to a few other women.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE UNION BARRACKS

I thought that my time had come and was in a dazed state. Most of the women with whom I had marched into Auschwitz had died. Selection could happen at any moment, and it meant certain death.

But I was told that I had been chosen to work in the munitions factory, the Union Kommando, on the night shift, from seven in the evening to seven in the morning, seven days a week.

With the other women who had also been chosen for work, we were marched to the entrance of the union barracks.

There we were met by the Kapo, who said, 'These are your living and sleeping quarters.'

The hut was bleak, dark and crudely assembled.

There were three wooden boards, one on top of the other and about two metres wide. Six to eight women had to sleep on one board, with one filthy blanket between them.

The Kapo, whose name was Paula, was Polish, but she had lived all her life in Paris.

"Do as you are told and don't make any problems. We are all trying to survive. Conditions are atrocious, and there are many selections. Every time new transports arrive, the SS call for a selection of the women who are getting weaker, and replace them with stronger new arrivals.'

Paula, whose face was etched with suffering, had seen so many women perish, women who had arrived in healthy condition just weeks before.

I think Paula was really heartbroken, but she could do nothing to help any one. Her life was just as much in peril as any prisoner, and I do not know if she survived the hell of Auschwitz. So few did.

Food was less than meagre. Our daily ration was a small piece of mouldy bread and a mug of what was called coffee. In reality it was brown water. There was no way to obtain extra water and other fluids impossible to find. We were always icy cold and desperately thirsty.

Women died like flies on a wall.

We knew when our fellow prisoners were doomed. They lost their spirit and walked around like the living dead. They were called *musselmanner* (walking skeletons) and mercifully they died quickly.

Every morning, we had to help remove dead bodies from the barracks. Then they were picked up by the crematorium squad, to be taken away for burning.

The terrible stench of burning bodies was ever present in the camp.

Despair and horror were all around, and adding to the hell was the sight of transports arriving packed with people, who shortly would be gassed to death. They would be met by SS officers who with one hand would gently stroke the heads of the savage dogs at their side and with the other lead little girls still hugging their dolls into the gas chamber.

How I came through the hours, days and months even to this day I don't know.

I do know that I blocked out all emotion. I never dared to think about my home life and the free world, for I knew I would not be able to stand up mentally to my present existence.

And yet all the time I had an inner feeling that I would survive. What it was that gave me that feeling I don't know, as no one was ever closer to death than the prisoners of Auschwitz destruction camp.

I did not permit myself to pray formally to survive this ordeal. But now, when I look back, I can identify those periods of utter despair. At times when there seemed no way out of the horror, I was overtaken by a complete inner stillness. When that happened, I always lost my voice.

I only know that there was a 'presence' that took over to help me carry on. That happened very frequently. To me that was like a protective cocoon, a kind of mental hiding place. When 'selections' took place, my life was in immediate danger. Then I relied on that inner feeling of support that took over when I was totally still.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE UNION MUNITIONS FACTORY

At least, working in the Union Munitions Factory was better than having to work outside in the freezing snow. All who worked the night shift received an extra bowl of soup at midnight. This meant that I could just sustain my life on the rations that we were given there.

The work was not only hard but hazardous, as we were continually watched by SS officers and prison guards. If someone stopped work for a moment, or if faulty parts were found mixed up with the good ones, that was considered to be sabotage, and punishments were dealt out constantly.

It was not just one person who was punished, but the all the workers of that particular table.

I remember one such incident where all the women working on one table were severely punished for sabotage. All the workers of the Union were forced to watch as camp commandant Hössler, who appeared demented from rage, screamed threats of imminent death while he flogged all the accused women mercilessly.

The entire work detail was in shock, but we could do nothing to help these women. When they were taken away, all bleeding badly, we assumed that they had been gassed. Two days later they were all returned to the block. This was the madness of the Nazi culture.

Punishments were never inflicted during work periods, but always in the short breaks for meals. The prison guards seemed to find it amusing to make us kneel on the concrete floor holding our stools above our heads, or force us to do floor gymnastics.

I repeatedly kept telling myself, 'Be calm they want you to collapse and lose control.' To remain constantly mentally alert demanded enormous will power.

I have never forgotten any of the faces or the horrors of Auschwitz, but I especially recall four young women who were hanged in front of all the slave labourers of the Union Munitions Factory, on January 6, 1945.

These four young women had, a few months before, smuggled dynamite powder from the munitions room, to the men of the crematorium. These men were responsible for the burning of the gassed bodies of the prisoners. They were known as the *Sonder Kommando*.

These *Sonder Kommando* were continually replaced by new arrivals, as no one who worked in the crematorium was allowed to live for more than a few months. So they too were gassed.

In October, 1944, one crematorium, (I think it was No. 4) was blown up with the smuggled dynamite and put out of action.

As well there was a revolt by the *Sonder Kommando*, which the Nazis crushed by putting everyone who worked at the crematoria to death.

The accused young women were all tortured and sentenced to hang - two in front of the day shift, two in front of the night shift.

These four young girls were incredibly brave. I shall never forget one of them who, just before the noose was placed around her neck, lifting her head up high, called out, 'Wake up, all of you, wake up.'

This picture stayed with me for years, and I am convinced that she saw beyond the horror of that moment, and looked into infinity where she could not be touched by her tormentors.

The agonising horror of the hanging had to be watched by the young sister of one of the girls. The two sisters were very close and had both struggled so much to survive. Now the time had come for the teenager to watch her beloved companion's execution. I was told that the surviving girl lost all will to go on, but friends in the camp took over and carried her through this added ordeal. In the end the young girl did survive. After liberation she married and now lives in Canada.

Some years ago, a monument to the four murdered girls was unveiled in Israel. They had paid with their lives for their heroic deeds. They will never be forgotten by the remaining Union Kommando survivors.

I vowed, if the impossible ever came about, I would stand in that place as a free person, and sink to my knees and pay homage to every soul who perished by the hands of the Nazis, here on this forsaken spot on earth.

**I have never gone back since liberation, but travel there often in my meditations,
to unite with those blessed souls who did not make it home.**

CHAPTER SIX

MEETING WITH REBECCA

Of the 150 women in the union barracks, I thought I was the only Dutch national. So I was surprised when one of the women told me that there was a Dutch woman in the day shift. She knew nothing about this woman, as we were only known by our numbers.

One afternoon a young woman came up to me and asked if I was Dutch.

She stared hard at me and asked my name. When I told her she said, 'No, your maiden name.'

^N
'Wyschenck.'

She stared at me and cried, 'You are my cousin. Oh my God, the only friend I had was taken to the gas chamber last week, and now I have found you.'

It is not surprising we did not recognise each other, since our last meeting was five years ago, and she always lived in Belgium. Apart from that our heads were shaved, our faces were drawn and hollow, and we were wearing filthy prison clothes. I doubt if our own mothers would have recognised us.

Rebecca had managed to escape with her husband, father and mother, who was my aunt, and her brother and sister-in-law, to the south of France.

From there the men made it safely into Spain.

The next day Rebecca, her mother and sister-in-law left to join them. Their guide, after robbing them of their money and jewellery, denounced them to the Gestapo.

On arrival at Auschwitz her mother was gassed, her sister-in-law Maria, who was not Jewish, was sent to the concentration camp at Ravensbruck. This was a camp mainly for non-Jewish political prisoners from all occupied countries. This included German political opponents of the Nazis. Maria survived.

From the moment of finding each other, Rebecca and I tried to keep together as much as possible.

Shortly after starting work at the munitions factory, I fell ill. My body was on fire with a fever, and I felt as though my head would burst. Among the workers at my table was a Greek Jewish doctor. He looked across at me and quietly said, 'My child, you have typhus.'

When I next saw Rebecca. I told her I was going to the *Revier*, the inmates hospital. This meant certain death. Rebecca bullied me and would not let me report sick. With her support I worked my shift in the factory and neither the Kapos or the SS guards ever suspected I was so ill. How I survived that particular ordeal, I still do not know.

And so Rebecca and I supported each other, covered for each other, saved each other's life on many occasions. To this day I can still say that neither of us would have survived if we had not met.

We worked, stood roll call for hours in the bitter cold, saw people being gassed, burned, hanged, slain, had barely enough to eat, and like all the prisoners, stole food whenever possible.

Every evening our column of women, workers on the night shift, walked to the munitions factory. This took about 25 minutes. Close by the factory was a railway line, and it was crossed by an elevated bridge. Below us in the darkness, the sombre looking carriages took civil coal miners home to their families in the next village.

I remember looking down watching the trains making their turn into the distance, and thinking, 'Oh, if I could ever experience the freedom of going home again to a normal life, I would be the most blessed person in the world.'

Whatever gave me that thought I cannot explain, as it seemed absolutely remote and quite impossible even to contemplate such a wish.

Towards the end of 1944, one morning when we were returning from work in the factory, we passed a column of prisoners from the men's camp. They were going to work.

When I found myself near such a group, I always called out softly, 'Are there any Dutchmen among you?'

A voice, just above a whisper answered, 'Yes I am Dutch.'

When I looked closer I saw it was my brother-in-law, Sam Lissing.

Next day I saw the men again, and Sam and I managed to whisper briefly to each other.

'I saw Herman a little while ago,' Sam told me, 'but he was very ill and really dying, so do not expect him to return. He was too far gone.'

I thought then that I would never see either Herman or Sam again.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE DEATH MARCH

It was the 17th of January, 1945, when we were suddenly told one night to line up, as we were being moved to another camp. I had been in Auschwitz for eighteen months.

What we did not know was that the Russians were only a few kilometres from the camp, and the German army was in retreat.

The Nazis, not wanting to leave any evidence of their atrocities, decided to take the starved and sick prisoners with them into Germany.

And so began another terrible and tragic journey.

We marched through the snow, heavily guarded by SS guards and German soldiers with guns and pistols. Anyone who could not keep up was shot dead. There were many. We were continually stumbling over dead bodies.

We marched through the snow for 110 kilometres, without food or water.

The second night of that march will never be erased from my mind. As the column of young women ploughed its way through the snow, icy cold winds blew and we could barely breathe.

Suddenly there was a bomb attack from Russian planes. We automatically dropped to the ground and lay face down in the snow. There was nowhere to

hide. It was an open field. The guards were screaming in panic. We all had to lie in the snow until the air-raid was over. The absolute horror of that episode is indelibly engraved in my innermost being.

When we were again forced to march on, many frozen bodies were left behind.

The whole march took place at gunpoint. The prison guards were just as panic stricken as we were, and they vented their fear and anger on the defenceless women. They told us continuously that we would be shot rather than liberated. We knew they meant it and most of us struggled on. Only the basic instinct to survive kept us going.

Finally we arrived at a siding of a small station called Loslau in Upper Silesia. Even there, the SS were still shooting wildly at the defenceless prisoners.

We were loaded onto open trucks, no protection from the snow, no food or water.

Although many women had been shot or died of cold during the march, we were still too many for the transports. Cramped in the trucks, it was impossible to sit down or even stand up without treading or pushing into someone else.

Fights broke out among the prisoners, most of whom were delirious from thirst. Had it been summer no one would have survived. Like dogs we lapped up the snow which saved our lives.

In the meantime the guards ate their rations and drank brandy from the flasks that they each had hung around their bodies.

After a day of waiting in the open trucks, we moved off, crisscrossing war-torn Germany. Everywhere we saw dead bodies, and later we heard all the camps had been evacuated.

After six days of dumping frozen bodies out of the wagons, we came to Ravensbruck, the women's political prisoners' camp near Berlin.

We first had to help remove dead bodies from the wagons.

About half the prisoners had gone mad. They ran wild and were gunned down on the spot.

In Ravensbruck conditions were just as terrible as any other camp. The officials did not know what to do with us.

Our pathetic group was hustled into a barrack.

There was still no water, no food. I felt myself going into a decline. We all huddled together on the muddy, frozen ground.

The next morning a few large buckets of boiled, unpeeled potatoes were thrown among us, and that caused a terrible fight.

I must have lost consciousness during that fight, because I came to with a potato clasped in each hand. In the afternoon we were led outside where large buckets of water were on the ground.

We threw ourselves face down into the water, everyone fighting desperately to drink. This was the only time I saw tears in the eyes of the German guards. I know from my experiences that thirst is far worse than hunger.

It was by now the end of January. And Rebecca and I were both in a state of utter despair.

Because the camp was so crowded, we were forced to sleep in the punishment block, the only space available. There were no bunks. We slept huddled together on the floor.

We still had to stand for roll call outside in the snow. One day, I found myself standing close to a hut. I looked through a small window and saw three very emaciated, sick young women lying on a bunk. One of them spoke French to the woman next to me. Her name was Violet Szabo, and she told us that she and her two companions were to be shot the next day.

Which they were.

Her name meant nothing to me then. It was only after the war I learnt of her courage and indeed the film made to honour her could not have a better title than *Carve her Name with Pride*.

We were all close to death, but that made no impression on us. Death was a familiar and close companion.

Such was the culture of the Third Reich. It was not life they represented. For wherever the Nazis had infiltrated, death resulted.

We stayed at Ravenbruck for three weeks. Then on February 11, my 21st birthday, whoever was left of our transport was again loaded onto trains.

After about twelve hours we arrived at another camp called Neustad-Glewe in Mecklenburgh.

Most of us were in state of collapse. How did we stay alive? I still don't know.

Neustad-Clewe was a smaller camp and could not cope with the influx of so many sick and starved prisoners, who were the remainder of the Auschwitz inmates made to flee the advancing Russian troops.

There was very little organisation in the camp, and most of the prisoners were confined to the barracks where no facilities were available. No food or water was distributed and the girls were dying all around us.

One week or so before our liberation, we were lined up again outside the barracks. We had to file past the SS guards and some of us were given a pink card. We never found out the significance of the pink card.

Rumours spread that we were to be transported to Sweden, which was a neutral country.

This did not happen in my camp, but I later found out that many prisoners from nearby camps reached the river Elbe on the way to Sweden. They were put on barges which were deliberately scuttled. Prisoners either drowned or were shot in the water. A very few did escape to Sweden.

Germany was in disarray on all fronts by now. The orders that came through from headquarters were confusing, even to the SS. Even so, their motivation at all times was to kill the prisoners. No living evidence of their crimes was to be left behind.

At some camps they achieved their goal. All prisoners were wiped out.

At Neustadt-Clewe, women just perished from hunger and total exhaustion. When a person is in such a condition, it is easy to just slip away, and the temptation to do so is great.

As for me, I just grimly clung to life. By then I was barefoot. My wooden shoes were lost during the death march. I was now barely able to move.

Planes now kept roaring overhead. We prayed to be bombed so we could be put out of our misery.

One day, after two months of suffering and despair, the Germans locked us in our hut and for twelve hours we did not hear a sound.

I could no longer stand and I was semi-conscious.

I thought if I close my eyes, I will die.

Suddenly we heard a lot of noise. One of the women, a political prisoner, looked through the tiny window. She recognised the vehicle outside.

'It's a Jeep!'

Then she screamed, 'Americans! They are Americans!'

CHAPTER EIGHT

LIBERATION. May 2nd 1945

The Americans rode into the camp unhindered. All the Germans guards and SS had fled.

Our liberators unlocked all the huts, and found a storeroom filled to the brim with potatoes, carrots, and other vegetables, as well as loaves of bread. They could not stay but told us that Russian tanks were coming later on.

The Third Reich that was going to exist gloriously for a thousand years, was now in tatters, and facing certain defeat.

Rebecca kept shaking me and begging me to get up. I remember thinking listlessly, 'What a pity. They have come too late to save me.'

I have no clear recollection of what was happening around me. I was carried outside on a door which someone had found. The women managed to make a fire into which they threw potatoes, and they also made soup.

I do remember someone putting hot soup into my mouth.

The Russians came that afternoon. They had no idea that there was a small camp hidden in this area. They had no food to give us. They killed a horse, and told those of us who could still walk, to go into the village of Neustadt, go into the houses and take whatever food we could find.

Some of the women who could still walk set out to the village and found most houses deserted. The occupants had fled in fear from the Russian troops. Surprisingly the empty homes contained lots of food left behind.

Most girls ate all they could, but paid dearly for it by becoming very sick afterwards. Some even died. Their starved bodies could not handle the food.

Many of the women brought food back into the camp. Some of us managed to survive on what we found to eat, but lots of women died after liberation as there was no medical help available at first.

I was later told it was fortunate that I could not obtain much food straight after liberation. My body had to adjust slowly to normal nourishment.

After three more weeks in the camp the Russians took Western European survivors over the ^{River} Elbe into the American zone. From there the Americans slowly started to repatriate survivors to their homeland.

On the 21st May, in a Red Cross army truck, I arrived in Enschede, in Holland.

I remember thinking, 'If only I could reach Holland before I die, I would be happy.' I stubbornly refused to die on German soil.

I cried for the first time in two years, when we crossed the border from Germany into Holland and I saw Dutch people standing at the roadside, with little national flags in their hands.

I was taken to an emergency hospital. I weighed 37 kilos (74 lbs). I was suffering from severe malnutrition, anaemia, gall bladder trouble, and was in a badly depleted state.

After three weeks in hospital I was still not able to eat properly. I had lost the purpose of existence, because none of my beloved family were left alive. I had been told that Herman had died. I had survived the ordeal but now had no reason for living.

It was decided that I was to be sent to Castle Eerde in Ommen.

This castle belonged to Baron van Palland. He had been interned by the Nazis as a hostage during the occupation of the Netherlands. He had been lucky not to be shot, like so many other hostages. When he returned home, he dedicated himself to helping his surviving countrymen recuperate on his beautiful estate. He converted his castle into a hospital for survivors of concentration camps who needed extra special care.

The castle in Eerde was a blessing. There I took my first steps to recovery, even though it was discovered that I was suffering from tuberculosis. The staff were very kind. Most of them had been in the Resistance against the Nazis.

Occupation forces were stationed nearby. When they found out that the patients in the castle hospital were concentration camp survivors, they sent gifts of chocolates and sweets.

The Baron came daily with baskets of fresh flowers from the gardens to visit the patients. He usually chatted with me, encouraging me to go on with my life. The Baron invited me to his house on the estate, where I met his wife and daughters.

The tranquillity of the estate was a soothing balm to my soul. Often I found a great urge to touch the shrubs and flowers growing in the gardens. This had a cleansing effect on me. I had a great need to rid myself of all the horror and ugliness I had lived through. It took many years before I could automatically accept the beauty of nature as a normal experience.

In order to survive the ordeal of the camps, I had blocked out most of my natural responses. The thawing out process was very painful, and I often cried to release dammed up emotions.

I know I had to find a purpose for my survival. I did not realise that this would become clear to me through a crisis which was to occur many years later on the other side of the world.

One day the Matron came into my room and said, 'Betty, I have some news for you. I want you to keep calm. One of your relatives has survived.'

'It must be a mistake,' I said. 'They are all dead.'

'No it is not a mistake. It is your husband, He is here.'

I screamed that she was a liar. It could not be. I was told he had died.

'No it is true, because he is already here, waiting outside.'

I kept screaming that she was lying. I did not want to see this man, and would they please leave me alone. Even here, I thought, they will not let me die in peace.

'All right, but I will send him in and you can see for yourself.'

I said, 'I don't want to see anyone,' and I buried my head under the blanket.

A voice said, 'Betty, please look up. It's me, really. I have also survived.'

Slowly, carefully, I lifted my head from under the blanket and started to laugh hysterically.

There was Herman, very skinny, cropped hair, puffy faced, because he was suffering from starvation oedema.

I was calmed with drugs, and after a little while, Herman sat beside me and we held hands. We talked about the day of his arrest, two years ago.

And what had happened to Herman during those two years?

Here he is, ready to tell you his story of survival.

HERMAN'S STORY

CHAPTER NINE

AGAINST ALL ODDS, I SURVIVED

This is a true account of how by last minute reprieves, my own desperate efforts, by strokes of good fortune, against all odds, I survived.

This is a story of war, murder, the abuse of human rights, and of love, heroism and faith.

I was born in Amsterdam on the 27th November, 1919, and my brother Sam was born two years later. Ours was a good middle class family, and we lived a comfortable life, although we were by no means rich.

After high school I enrolled in night school to study English, French and German. I was also interested in athletics and took my sports training very seriously. Like my father, who was an excellent musician, I played the piano and accordion.

At nineteen, in September 1938, I was drafted for compulsory military service, and had no trouble being accepted for officer training into the Royal Dutch Airforce. This was no hardship, as all the young men treated the training as a big exciting game.

It was only a year later, when Germany invaded Poland in September 1939, that our attitude changed, because it seemed we might become involved in a war.

It was not until all reserve personnel were mobilised and all leave cancelled we began to take our training seriously.

Early in 1940 my unit was transferred to the city of Rotterdam. It did not take long before a society for service-men was established. This was a popular meeting place for the young people of Rotterdam, especially girls, to become acquainted with soldiers, sailors and airmen. One day a piano arrived and soon I was playing all the latest hits.

Until that fateful day of the 10 May, 1940, I had a life free of worries, and even to this day I consider my first twenty years to have been the good years.

It was 4 a.m., 10th May, 1940.

We were asleep in our room, in a school converted into army barracks. A continuous drone of planes overhead woke us. I said, 'The Allies are late tonight on their way to Germany.'

But then we heard explosions, saw searchlights. It took a few seconds for us to realise that we were being attacked from the air.

The order came to dress, and we marched to our headquarters at the Goredelroad, where we heard that the airfield at Waalhaven had been bombed and that our combat planes stationed there had been destroyed.

Our division was now attached to the elite corps of the Royal Marines. They had been fighting German paratroopers since early morning.

War was now declared between Holland and Germany. I was put in charge of a section stationed at the Gordelroad, with instructions to watch over and hold the open field adjoining our barracks.

It was now about eight in the morning. German troops were being parachuted on to all open fields. Stuka dive bombers were attacking all over Rotterdam with incendiary bombs.

A five hundred pound bomb hit the roof of the building in which we were stationed, and although penetrating the top floor, failed to explode.

I looked at the large hole in the ceiling with the menacing bomb clearly visible. I could hardly believe my luck.

Meanwhile snipers had installed themselves on rooftops and at strategic points all over town. Our job was to apprehend them. We arrested scores of snipers. Most were Dutch traitors and German civilians who had come to Holland under the pretence of fleeing Nazism.

It was difficult to find out what was happening in the rest of the country. We knew that gliders and aeroplanes were landing on the speedway to The Hague, and that the country was under water.

The marines were engaged in hand to hand combat and managed to hold the vital Maasbridge against overwhelming odds.

There was no single front, fighting was going on everywhere in around the city. On the third day most of our anti-aircraft guns had been silenced. With the airfield in German hands there was no air defence left. Hundreds of stuka dive bombers started dropping their bombs everywhere. For the first time in nearly a century, the peaceful population of the Netherlands had to face the agony and destruction of total war.

Fires raged everywhere and for many days. An unstoppable inferno because there was no water to put out flames.

The Dutch government had no choice but to surrender to the Nazis.

The rape of my beloved Holland by a foreign army, was more than I could bear. I cried as I surrendered my weapons.

With my comrades I was taken prisoner, and crammed into the confined space of a church. From our 'prison' we could see the tanks, trucks with machine guns, a totally motorised army which even after two days and nights showed no sign of ending.

The German high command was hoping that the Dutch population would recognise the common heritage, and would join them.

If there had ever been the remotest chance of that happening, the bombardment of Rotterdam and the invasion of our beloved country put an end to that.

One day, after the German army had passed through on the way to Belgium, (already occupied) and France, we were ordered to return to our old barracks, where we would be under house arrest.

A few days later, a vacancy occurred for a courier to carry messages between the various prisons centres. I volunteered, and was given an old Harley Davidson bike. I knew it was only a matter of time, before I would be able to hightail it out of Rotterdam and rejoin my family in Amsterdam.

And so it came to pass, with papers proving that I was a courier, I managed to talk my way through roadblocks, and soon I was riding through the familiar streets of Amsterdam.

In all the confusion, going on in Rotterdam, and before any proper organisation had been established, I was never missed.

I left the motor bike in front of our local police station and considered myself honourably discharged. The Germans did not want to tie up valuable manpower, food or transport keeping war prisoners in Holland. All Dutch servicemen had been released by the Germans.

When the war was over, and I was again called up for duty, my papers were in order.

Before the war I had been a member of the Amsterdam Athletic Club, and I was their champion 800 and 1500 metres runner.

With the Germans issuing decree after decree limiting the movement of Jews, and forbidding contact with Christians, I had to find a Jewish sportsclub. I went along to the famous Bato Gymnastic club, and became a member.

That is where I first met Betty. She oozed health and vitality, as well as being very popular. To my surprise she accepted my invitation for a date.

You know all about our marriage, our loss of family, and our escape from Holland, so let me go on to the day of my arrest by the SS in Brussels.

Because I worked as a musician at night, and had the added security of a musicians union pass, I moved about Brussels as if I had lived there all my life.

I was free during the day, and so started to carry messages for the Belgian resistance.

On the afternoon of the 10th of August 1943, I was walking home carrying a large fruit pie for our evening meal, when I heard someone calling my name. I looked around and recognised two friends from Amsterdam. They had come out of hiding to buy cigarettes. Not knowing where to buy them, they made the mistake of crossing the street to talk to me.

Unknown to them they had been followed by a car, carrying Gestapo agents looking for escaping Jews. With drawn pistols they stopped beside us. The fact that I ran, and they had to chase me through several streets before capture, did not help the situation at all. We were all taken to Gestapo headquarters.

That evening, after hours of interrogation and beatings, I was taken to the notorious Gestapo prison on Avenue Louise, where I was placed in a cell separate from the Jews because according to my papers I was a Belgian Christian, suspected of being a spy and a member of the resistance.

I was again interrogated and beaten, as they felt sure that I knew where other spies were hiding.

I was thrown back into my cell, bleeding and with blackened eyes, longing for Betty, who was always composed and a tower of strength.

I thought of all the people who had risked their lives to help us, and all the agonies we endured to escape.

I cried myself to sleep.

When I woke next morning I noticed a message scratched onto the concrete wall with a nail. It read: 'To all who dwell here, COURAGE. We will be victorious.'

I found a piece of glass and scratched on the wall,

'Herman Lissing has been here,' using my own name for the first time since leaving Amsterdam. (Visiting Brussels after the war, I went to that prison, to see my old cell. The messages were still on the wall.)

I was taken into a large room where three SS officers interrogated me.

When I refused to answer questions, one said, 'We are wasting time. He does not want to talk. Shoot him.'

I started to talk, but it was not what they wanted to hear.

I told them the truth, that I was a Jew from Amsterdam trying to escape to England.

'It makes no difference, the death sentence still stands.'

'Why waste a bullet, there is a transport with Jews leaving tomorrow, let him be on it. In Auschwitz he will die anyway.'

This remark gave me for the first time an indication of where I was going and what could happen. However I must have been one of the very few Jews, whose life has been saved by being Jewish.

I was taken to Malines transit camp, where I was to stay for the next six weeks together with 1200 others, waiting transport to Auschwitz. I received mail and a food parcel from Betty, and I knew she was in contact with Jo Panke.

SS soldiers were stationed inside and outside the camp, and before dark all the prisoners were locked in. During the day prisoners were allowed to go outside into a large courtyard, but always under heavy guard.

Food was bad, but not limited in any way, and apart from domestic chores, no work was expected from the prisoners.

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It did cross our minds, that if conditions were like this in German camps, we, the young people, would be able to survive.

Suddenly on the 19th of September 1943, without any prior warning, we were ordered to line up in the courtyard.

Under heavy guard we were marched to a waiting train of cattle wagons, and were handed over to a company of SS officers and soldiers.

With rifle butts and batons they pushed us into the cattle trucks and were locked in. Without food or water we started the death ride to Auschwitz.

Women, children, babies, old people, in complete darkness, with no room to sit, lay down or even stand comfortably, were packed in darkness for three, sometimes four or more days.

The fanaticism of the SS can be measured by the fact, that even German troops on their way to battle sometimes had to wait for days before transport was available. But always ready were the transports taking Jews, Gypsies, clergy and dissenters of the Nazi regime, to death camps. That had priority over winning the war.

There is nothing that I can think of that degenerates people faster, than to withhold toilet facilities, water and food, and lock them in a dark and confined space.

If I thought our transport was inhumane, I would soon learn, that it was only the first of a long series of horrendous experiences.

There had been nothing in my life, ex air-force officer, champion athlete, healthy modern twentieth century person, that had prepared me for the absolute misery, the senseless cruelty that I would have to endure for the next twenty months.

People often use the expression 'hell on earth,' perhaps without really knowing the full meaning of what they are saying. I, for one, can talk about hell on earth with authority, because I have been there.

I also know that there are no words in any vocabulary to describe the utter agony and despair inflicted upon their victims by the German Nazis.

Stumbling out of the cattle truck, I was pushed with a rifle butt towards a group of men in white coats sitting behind long tables.

Everyone had to file past that table and from there onto the waiting trucks. A few young men were told to step aside and form another line.

About a hundred of us were marched, under heavy guard, towards a row of barracks in the distance.

On our way we were passed by trucks carrying the rest of our transport, and turning towards the buildings with smoking chimneys.

1. The first part of the document is a letter from the President of the United States to the Congress, dated January 3, 1801. It is a very important document, as it contains the President's first message to the Congress, and it is also the first time that the President has addressed the Congress in person.

2. The second part of the document is a letter from the President to the Congress, dated January 11, 1801. It is also a very important document, as it contains the President's second message to the Congress, and it is also the first time that the President has addressed the Congress in person.

3. The third part of the document is a letter from the President to the Congress, dated January 18, 1801. It is also a very important document, as it contains the President's third message to the Congress, and it is also the first time that the President has addressed the Congress in person.

4. The fourth part of the document is a letter from the President to the Congress, dated January 25, 1801. It is also a very important document, as it contains the President's fourth message to the Congress, and it is also the first time that the President has addressed the Congress in person.

5. The fifth part of the document is a letter from the President to the Congress, dated February 1, 1801. It is also a very important document, as it contains the President's fifth message to the Congress, and it is also the first time that the President has addressed the Congress in person.

6. The sixth part of the document is a letter from the President to the Congress, dated February 8, 1801. It is also a very important document, as it contains the President's sixth message to the Congress, and it is also the first time that the President has addressed the Congress in person.

7. The seventh part of the document is a letter from the President to the Congress, dated February 15, 1801. It is also a very important document, as it contains the President's seventh message to the Congress, and it is also the first time that the President has addressed the Congress in person.

Being chosen to work, I found out, was not a guarantee of being spared from the gas chamber. Selection for death could come at any moment.

I soon learned that nobody cared whether we lived or died. The struggle to stay alive on one scoop of watery soup made from potato peels, and a piece of mouldy bread, was so constant and intense, that compassion for other prisoners was practically impossible.

Work consisted of breaking large stone with sledge hammers behind the barracks.

After roll call, we had to witness a hanging of two 'saboteurs.' They had stolen some food from the garbage tip behind the kitchen.

Hangings from this 'crime' went on almost every day.

Apart from the ever present hunger, prisoners had to cope with vermin. Every variety of bug and lice, bit into starved flesh. Nobody could escape.

In the few hours of free time, it was possible to shower and try to keep clean. Without washing regularly, vermin on the body increased. When a person stopped washing himself, he was on the verge of becoming a *muzzelman*, a walking skeleton, doomed to die.

Behind the washroom was a market. There prisoners gathered, exchanged and bartered. Food was the magic word. For hours men would argue about the value

of a piece of bread, or a cigarette or a piece of cloth which could be used as a sock.

Everything had a use. Even an old newspaper could be used as an undergarment around the chest keeping the icy cold wind a little bit at bay.

Because I could speak German and French, I learned that the smaller camps had no gas chambers, or selections. Of course there was hard labour, but there the chance of survival was better than in a destruction camp, which was the role of Auschwitz.

One day after returning to my barrack after work and roll call, I was ordered to go to the clothing store.

There to my surprise and comfort I was given a warmer set of clothing. I was then ordered back to the camp square where twenty of us, escorted by four SS guards and two Kapos with dogs, were marched out of the camp. We were going to work in a coal mine at Furstengrube.

CHAPTER TEN

LABOUR IN THE COAL MINE

The weather was mild, and it was a relief to get away from the continual stench of burning bodies. It took about six hours to reach the camp at Furstengrube. What I noticed immediately was that the prisoners here were more warmly dressed and better fed.

There was also a small barrack called the *muzik stubl* (music hall).

The work in the mine was hard, supervised by the coal miners of the region. Their treatment of the prisoners was fair, providing they did their work.

One Sunday the *lager elteste* (camp leader) not to be confused with the camp commandant, an SS officer, came up to me and said, 'I have been informed that you are a musician. Can you play the piano accordion?'

'Yes.'

'Good. I have been looking for someone with whom I can play, as I am a professional drummer. I will arrange some concerts for the guards and possibly also for the prisoners.'

And that is what happened, and my existence improved to being bearable. I still had to work in the coal mine, but playing in the *muzik stubl* earned me extra food, helped me to get stronger.

One day the *lager elteste* said to me, 'You don't have to work in the mine any more. From now on you will look after the music room.'

I had now the status of a 'prominent,' a prisoner still, but on the same level as a Kapo, and it was an important factor in living and staying alive.

In the music room was a piano accordion, a drum set and various violins and guitars. My responsibility was to keep the room clean and look after the instruments.

The music room was the temporary home of Tita, the camp commandant's dog, because she had just given birth to a litter of puppies.

I was terrified of the vicious German Shepherd, but fortunately she was tied up, and when cleaning the room I made sure to stay out of reach of Tita and her puppies.

She snarled and growled every time I came into the room, but after a while, she became used to me, and gradually accepted me as a friend. I also lost my fear of her and was allowed to hold her puppies.

Life in Furstengrube was exactly what it was supposed to be. A work camp for forced labour. But there were no gassings, and there was not the constant fear that any moment could be the last, as was the case in Auschwitz-Birkenau.

I became known as the *musiker* (musician) and even the soldiers sometimes slipped me extra bread or potatoes.

The next six months enable me to build up more body reserve, which I was going to really need.

One day, I had been in the camp for six months, a truck on the way to Auschwitz with about forty 'selections' broke down not far from Furstengrube.

The doomed prisoners were marched into the camp to wait while repairs were carried out. Among them I recognised an old friend from Amsterdam. Salomon van Cleef, a violinist of note.

While the guards were distracted by a noise, I took Sal into my barracks and hid him in my bunk. It was my idea to let him have one comfortable night, as it was bitterly cold outside.

When we went outside the next morning the truck, with the other 'selections' was on its way to Auschwitz. How Sal had been missed during the roll call must have been due to the free flowing beer that the guards had consumed the night before.

I knew I was in big trouble. I sent Sal back to my bunk while I stood roll call, The SS making their usual inspection of the barracks found Sal, and an inquiry was ordered.

Seeing that the situation was hopeless, I volunteered that it had been me trying to save an old friend , who was also a first class musician, and could be of value to the camp orchestra.

Sal, who had only followed my directions was allowed to stay in Furstengrube and join the orchestra. I would be punished and sent back to the coal mine. Only the fact that I was *musiker*, had saved me from execution.

All punishments, hanging, flogging, were always carried out on Sunday, so as not to interfere with the work load.

This was Tuesday, so I had time to reflect.

Whatever the punishment was to be, it would certainly result in physical damage and not being able to work, meant death.

Sunday the entire camp was assembled to see me punished.

After roll call my number was called, and I knew my time had come. In my agony I had not noticed it was snowing heavily and icy wind was blowing. The prisoners were cursing me for having to stand in a snow storm because of my stupidity.

As soon as I came forward, I was stripped naked, the camp commandant grinned, blew a whistle, calling his killer dogs.

Within seconds a vicious Doberman had hold of my arm, and almost immediately he would be joined by two other dogs who would finish me off.

Tita, who was called out for exercise, recognised me, and growled at the Doberman, chasing him away. She came back to me and licked my face, as if to say, 'This is my friend, so lay off.'

The Commandant said, 'You are the luckiest b... in this camp,' and called off the punishment.

However, I knew that something was going to happen to me. The SS would not allow me to go unpunished. The entire system was based upon meeting out punishments, so it could instil fear.

A few weeks later, I was told to collect my meagre possessions: one bowl, one piece of soap, one spoon and a vest, given by a friend in Auschwitz.

A truck with other 'selections' came into the camp. Before getting on, Sal came up to me and said, 'I am partly to blame. Let me talk to them.'

'No, Sal. You know they will not change their minds.'

As I sat in the truck I tried to come to terms with saying farewell to life.

After about an hour's drive, the truck suddenly stopped. The doors were thrown open and with the usual *Raus, Raus* (Out, Out), we were lined up beside the truck.

I believed we had come to Auschwitz, but as I looked around I could not see the dominant feature of that camp - smoking chimneys.

Risking a beating, I turned to the Kapo guarding us and asked, 'Which camp is this?'

He answered, 'This is Camp Monowitz, the camp for the works at Buna-I.G. Farben Industries.'

As he was concentrating on his task of guarding us, he forgot to hit me for my impertinence in asking a question without getting permission first.

We were left standing for at least an hour, and without being sure, a flicker of hope started to stir inside us.

Usually there were no stopovers on the way to the gas chambers. I could not think of a single reason why we would be treated differently from the many thousands who had preceded us. I only knew that whatever it was, it certainly was not compassion. However even a few hours living was a bonus, and we accepted the delay gratefully.

It was the first day of April 1944, and my second wedding anniversary.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE BUNA FACTORIES

We had arrived at Buna-Monowitz, the camp supply labour for the work force of the I.G. Farben Industries. The works were situated within twenty minutes walk of the camp. Actually, the camp was built at that particular spot to accommodate the works for the Buna factories.

It was also only seven kilometres from Auschwitz, so a constant supply of labour was assured.

Every morning thousands of prisoners marched out of the camp, accompanied by the usual sounds of the camp's orchestra.

After being registered, we were told to report to Block 10. Only then did we realise we had escaped (for the time being at least) the gas chamber. We did not dwell on the question and why and how, but just accepted gratefully that we were still alive.

The layout of the camp was very similar to Auschwitz, with the notable exception of the crematorium. The conditions at Buna were slightly better than those at Auschwitz, and most prisoners were able to work.

We stood in line outside the block in a temperature well below zero. Dressed in rags, we were soon covered with snow.

Buna was a huge complex of factories, all working for the war industry. The camp had been built to supply labour to the factories. That was the reason for our 'miraculous' escape. The day before there had been a 'selection,' depleting the ranks and necessitating the recruiting of labour.

Not only prisoners worked at Buna, but also hundreds of 'civilian' workers from all occupied countries, and even English prisoners of war. At noon a siren sounded for 'lunch.'

There were canteens and mess rooms for all civilians and soldiers, prisoners had to stay where they were. We did however get a bowl of thin cabbage soup, our daily ration of food when working.

To walk from the camp to the factory, where I was working, was a new experience, as we passed civilians and even children, all free and doing what normal people everywhere were doing.

When we marched back to the camp after a day's work, we were brought right back to the cruel reality of being prisoners with no rights whatsoever, not even to life itself.

As the factories were closed on Sunday, we prisoners stayed in the camp. That did not mean a day of rest. We had to unload heavy bags of cement from trucks.

My resistance and general health was deteriorating rapidly, and I suddenly lost all will to go on.

I dragged myself to the hospital. I was allocated a bunk and prepared myself to go with the next selection.

The next morning I was awakened by someone pulling me by the arm.

'There is someone outside who claims he is one of your family.'

I slowly climbed down from my bunk and stumbled outside and fell into the arms of my brother Samuel.

He had just arrived from another camp, and learned that there was a relative of his in the hospital.

I suddenly found a renewed will to live and left the hospital immediately.

My brother kept saying, 'You look like a walking skeleton.'

Samuel had just arrived from a camp in Holland, where conditions were much better than in German camps. Being a diamond cutter, he had received special treatment, and with others from the diamond industry, was employed by the Nazis to cut diamonds. He had been reasonably well fed, and under the circumstances, looked good.

To be able to see Sam and talk to him regularly gave me renewed hope to stay alive.

But one day, coming back from work, I learned that Sam as well as the other diamond cutters, had been sent to Auschwitz.

I was devastated. I didn't even get a chance to say goodbye.

So I was alone again working at a clearing site, shovelling stones and dirt. One morning I was told to join another Kommando, a group which was working on the construction of a bridge, which was to connect two factories.

I had to sit atop of a sort of 'painters donkey,' about eight metres from the ground, and fasten heavy nuts and bolts with a huge spanner.

One morning while working on the bridge I fell asleep from sheer exhaustion.

I sat there on the platform, with everyone looking up to see when I would fall from my high perch. I did not hear the *meister* (boss) call out to me, and finally he had to send up another worker to wake me.

When I came down the *meister* informed me that he had put my number in his book and would report me for committing sabotage.

This meant certain death.

Sabotage was punished by hanging or by being flogged with a baton, one metre long, and two centimetres thick. This punishment was carried out in the 'bunker' the name given to an underground cell, where prisoners were tortured.

Every camp under Nazi control had a punishment bunker.

I knew that the flogging of twenty-five strokes with the baton meant a broken spine and smashed kidneys. Surviving the punishment was a useless and painful experience, as the victim generally died within a few days, or was sent to the gas chamber.

I looked at the *meister*. I knew the situation was hopeless. I felt violently sick and started to gasp for air. He told me to sit down as I could not work anyway.

At noon the siren sounded for the meal break.

But it did not stop it just continued. This was unusual. But then we heard the sound of aeroplanes approaching. This was the first time an air raid had taken place over Buna.

Bombs started to fall and the SS and civilians took cover. We prisoners had to stay where we were.

For about forty minutes wave after wave of aircraft flew over. They concentrated on the near finished factories which we were connecting with bridges.

The air raid destroyed one new factory, but did no damage to Buna.

When the all clear sounded, there were only a few casualties, one of which was the *meister*.

He lay buried beneath a pile of rubble, with my number in his pocket. It was never found, and not minimising my other near misses, I consider this episode as my closest brush with death.

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE LONG ROAD TO FREEDOM

From that day on I was convinced that I would survive the camp, as I could not think of a closer call with death.

After the bombardment of Buna and the constant advancement of the Russians, a change seemed to have come over the Germans. Some became more talkative, others became even more embittered and sadistic.

One thing was sure, the Germans were facing defeat, and the question which concerned us was, whether we would come out alive or dead. There were no illusion as to what the SS had in mind. They could not afford to leave behind evidence of their cruelty and inhumanity.

Less and less work was being done at Buna, and sabotage became more and more prevalent.

On January 17, 1945, we were told at roll call that no work would be done that day, and that inspections would be made in all barracks. Almost at the same time artillery fire could be heard in the distance. It became clear that the Russians were very near.

There was a certain excitement in the atmosphere, as it was evident that something dramatic would happen.

Perhaps even liberation by the Russians.

THEORY OF THE EARTH

BY J. H. VAN DIJK, D. SC.

THEORY OF THE EARTH, PART I. THE EARTH AS A BODY.

THEORY OF THE EARTH, PART II. THE EARTH AS A SYSTEM.

THEORY OF THE EARTH, PART III. THE EARTH AS A PROCESS.

THEORY OF THE EARTH, PART IV. THE EARTH AS A PHENOMENON.

THEORY OF THE EARTH, PART V. THE EARTH AS A FACT.

THEORY OF THE EARTH, PART VI. THE EARTH AS A CONCEPT.

THEORY OF THE EARTH, PART VII. THE EARTH AS A THEORY.

THEORY OF THE EARTH, PART VIII. THE EARTH AS A METHOD.

THEORY OF THE EARTH, PART IX. THE EARTH AS A RESULT.

THEORY OF THE EARTH, PART X. THE EARTH AS A CONCLUSION.

THEORY OF THE EARTH, PART XI. THE EARTH AS A SUMMARY.

THEORY OF THE EARTH, PART XII. THE EARTH AS A FINALITY.

THEORY OF THE EARTH, PART XIII. THE EARTH AS A SYNTHESIS.

THEORY OF THE EARTH, PART XIV. THE EARTH AS A COMPLETION.

THEORY OF THE EARTH, PART XV. THE EARTH AS A REALIZATION.

THEORY OF THE EARTH, PART XVI. THE EARTH AS A FULFILLMENT.

THEORY OF THE EARTH, PART XVII. THE EARTH AS A TRIUMPH.

After being locked in our barracks for twenty four hours, we were again ordered out for roll call. We prisoners could not believe what we were seeing.

All civilian kitchen staff, all musicians, all SS, in short everyone who would normally stay behind in the camp when others went to work, were also lined up.

The SS with large packs on their backs were heavily armed. At the end of the line were dozens of trucks, carts, a light cannon and even two large tiger tanks. SS men on horseback and even on bicycles and a column of *Werhmacht* foot soldiers made up the rear.

Kapos went along the lines of prisoners handing each one a full loaf of bread saying, 'This is the only food you will get for the next three or four days. We don't know when or where we will get the next supply.'

Of course, we realised the entire camp was being evacuated. Where to and what would happen to us was the question, not only for us prisoners, but for most of the SS as well.

It was a cold and miserable day, with snow more than half a metre deep, and an icy wind blowing. The SS kept urging us to go faster and faster as we moved out of the camp.

Of course, the SS were not common soldiers who had been drafted, or stationed at the camps by chance. They were volunteers, well aware of what they were doing. They had all been trained in special units. They had no desire to fall into enemy hands, especially the Russians, as there were in all camps Russian prisoners, Christians as well as Jews.

This journey was a Death March.

The SS were shooting anyone who could not keep up. The road was strewn with bodies.

Totally without rest we travelled 180 kilometres, without food or water. Nobody wanted to be in the last section of the column as they ran the biggest risk of being shot, so there was a constant pushing forward by a mass of people. Often prisoners would take the clothes and rations from the fallen dead. It was that or perish.

All the time an icy wind froze hands and feet and soon the intense cold started to take its toll of even the strongest. By the hundreds, people just sat down and could not get up again. They were either shot or they froze to death before the SS could reach them.

Eventually we neared the road from Auschwitz-Birkenau, and there saw the same thing happening as in Buna-Monowitz.

The entire population of that camp was waiting to join our pathetic group, and together with prisoners from other camp, the total must have been between sixty and eighty thousand people. They were the last surviving concentration camp inmates in that area.

The struggle for life, and the hunger and agony those people had endured, in the hope of being one day free again, made the death march a calamity just by itself.

THEORY OF THE EARTH

The theory of the earth is a branch of geology which deals with the origin and development of the earth and its various parts. It is a science which seeks to explain the processes which have shaped the earth and its features. The theory of the earth is based on the study of the earth's structure and its history. It is a science which seeks to explain the processes which have shaped the earth and its features. The theory of the earth is based on the study of the earth's structure and its history.

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Without let up and going ever faster, we were driven by the guards, who were by now in a panic themselves.

It was clear from the sounds of the Russian cannon fire, we were only just ahead of them.

At last we reached an abandoned camp, Gross Rosen, near the town of Gleiwitz. Because it was possible in this camp to guard a large number of prisoners with the least number of guards, we were all driven inside and packed together like sardines.

Prisoners, guards and Kapos of various camps were now all thrown together, and there was complete chaos.

The Kapos had lost their authority and were now treated the same as other prisoners. Some of these Kapos had for years been bestial toward the prisoners, so it was no surprise that a few of them had fatal accidents during the night.

The SS did not trust anyone and ruled by terror. Human life was worth absolutely nothing, and people were being shot dead for just tripping over a stone.

In all the turmoil I saw a familiar face. I could not place a name to that face. He also recognised me.

We kept staring at each other, and suddenly he said, 'You are Herman Lissing, Betty's husband. Don't you recognise me? I'm Betty's cousin Sally Wynschenk.'

Now I knew how utterly emaciated we were. Sally used to be one of the best and fittest boxers in Holland.

He had come with a column from Auschwitz and told me the first good news I had for years. He had seen Betty. She had marched out of Auschwitz from the women's camp.

She must have been within a few kilometres from where we were, but it might as well have been a thousand, for all the good it did me.

I had only to look around, and the ray of hope sparked by the news of Betty being alive faded. From what I could see, there was no chance that anyone would survive this hell much longer.

During the afternoon of the following day we were chased out of the barrack, where we had tried to sleep. Huddled together in the yard, Sally and I clung together, scared to lose each other.

Hours later, we had to line up just standing in long rows, packed together like sardines.

As the order came to start moving, I heard my name being whispered. I looked around and could not believe my eyes. There was Sal van Cleef and a whole lot of people I knew from Furstengrube walking just behind me. They had taken the same route we had followed and now had joined the larger columns from Auschwitz-Birkenau and Buna-Monowitz.

Disregarding the risk of being punished for breaking rank, they all wanted to talk to me as they had been sure I would have been gassed within an hour of leaving Furstengrube.

When I told them that we had no food whatsoever, they gave me some bread, which I shared with Sally. The prisoners from Furstengrube had at least a little bit more to eat, as the commandant had ordered all food from the kitchen to be distributed. That was the one and only gesture of humanity I had encountered in all the time I was held in a concentration camp.

As we walked out of the camp, we were ordered to the side of the road and commanded to halt. I saw a long row of women prisoners approaching.

By now I was used to anything, but the sight of these women with bald shaven heads, sunken chests, stick-like arms and legs, and many without teeth, was like something out of a horror movie.

We were marched to a railway loading, where we had to board a similar train to the one which had transported me to Auschwitz.

This time, however, the wagons were open and the snow and ice had free play. It caused us to freeze. I saw people with their limbs frozen together, dying joined like Siamese twins. I saw people with foam on their lips, from the effort of trying to break loose from frozen bodies.

Now another trek started, into Germany in a cattle train to an unknown destination.

There were trains pulling out from everywhere, as by now the front was closing in. Everything the *Wehrmacht* had left to fight with was being sent back to Germany for the last stand.

After three days where the only food we had were morsels thrown into the wagons by passing civilians. We arrived at a large well lit camp, into which we marched, now a pitiful 1500 or so. That was all that was left of the 4000 who had boarded the train.

Camp Dora was different from the other camps. Here the forced labourers and prisoners worked on the V2 rockets.

After standing roll call for hours, we were marched into a large barrack called the *Kino* (cinema). We were all pushed into a totally inadequate space.

On the stage buckets of water, and a few drums of boiled unpeeled potatoes had been placed.

I did not join in the stampede to get to the stage, as I was too weak, and I had Sally to look after. By now he could no longer stand.

I had no illusions about what would happen to us. We would be left to die. I started to look around for a way to get out of this hell hole.

Looking out of one of the window slits, I saw a civilian gesturing to me to break the window and climb through.

He spoke French and this was where all those French lessons paid off.

He told me to squeeze through the narrow window. Only weighing 94 lbs, it was not difficult. I called Sal van Cleef, and he also managed to squeeze through, but there was no way we could get Sally out. I never saw him again.

We followed the Frenchman to his barrack. He gave us some food and he pointed to the empty bunks, where we laid down and rested.

I could not sleep remembering the agony of the death march, the suffering experienced by so many thousands, the inhumanity of the Germans. Even now I cannot find adequate words to describe the horror. But there are moments when I want to scream at the heavens.

There was no proper roll call at the camp, but to remain undiscovered would be impossible.

We stood roll call with our French protector, and so Sal and I were marched out of Dora to a small work camp, called Ricklingen. It was quite different from other camps as it housed mainly Kapos, political prisoners and forced labourers.

For the next few weeks we had to lay tracks for a new railway line with no train in sight. The guards kept shouting 'faster faster' and one would have thought that only our efforts to lay this line for a non-existent train would save the Fatherland. But that was typical of Nazi mentality.

One morning we noticed that there were very few guards left in the camp. They lined us up without roll call, which was unusual, and marched us off.

Sal and I looked at each other, as we could hear small arms fire not far off.

Coming to a clearing in the wood, we were ordered to sit down. We could see in the distance a column of tanks approaching. The Germans had very few tanks left, and we were all sure that these belonged to the Americans.

Sal and I, the only two Jewish prisoners, kept very much to ourselves. We all became very silent, and some of the other prisoners were praying. I looked around fearing the guards were going to shoot us dead. But all the guards had fled.

Later I found out that all guards in all the camps had orders not to leave one prisoner alive, but in our case the rapid advance of the Americans frightened the guards, who ran off leaving their weapons behind.

Across the wheatfields we suddenly saw a military column with trucks and tanks moving parallel to where we were.

The white star painted on each vehicle was clearly visible.

We started to shout and wave our arms and before long a truck came towards us across the wheatfield. Three American soldiers jumped out. One of them said, 'What are you guys doing here. You are sitting bang in the middle of the combat zone.'

But when he got closer, his face suddenly turned white and he just stared at us.

I approached the others and said in English, 'I have been waiting a long time for you to come. Please help us, we have suffered so much and we are near the end of our endurance.'

One of the men opened his arms and hugged me.

I was liberated.

It was Friday the 13th April, 1945.

After giving us cigarettes, chocolate and all the rations they had, they told us to stay put, and an ambulance would come and take us to hospital.

They kept on repeating, 'Jesus, how is this possible. What have they done to these people.'

Meanwhile heavy fighting was going on, and the horizon was aflame as if a huge fire was burning. But about an hour or so later a row of ambulances came across the wheatfield.

Without any fuss, they laid us gently on stretchers and took us to a small church converted into an emergency hospital.

Being the only one of our group to speak English gave me a moral lift. I was of course near collapse, but somehow I found renewed energy.

1. The first part of the document is a letter from the President of the United States to the Congress, dated January 3, 1801. It is a very important document, as it is the first time that the President has addressed the Congress since the establishment of the office.

2. The second part of the document is a report from the Secretary of the Treasury, dated January 3, 1801. It is a very important document, as it is the first time that the Secretary of the Treasury has reported to the Congress since the establishment of the office.

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4. The fourth part of the document is a report from the Secretary of the War, dated January 3, 1801. It is a very important document, as it is the first time that the Secretary of the War has reported to the Congress since the establishment of the office.

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The Americans were very well equipped and before long food was prepared for us. Pancakes made from milk powder and cans of hash potatoes, provided the first decent meal in years.

With my stomach full and speaking my best English, I walked around like a king.

In a far corner of the church was an old organ, and I suddenly found the strength to start playing. Soon all the Americans were singing away, and it reminded me of how I used to play for my air force mates in Holland. Although that was only five years ago, it seemed to have been in another life, long, long ago.

The next morning we were loaded into trucks, the worst cases went in ambulances and we drove off to Hanover, 400 kilometres away.

When we arrived at the hospital, there were no vacant beds, as many wounded German soldiers and civilians had been brought in. Of course there was no room for any concentration camp survivors.

An American colonel with two aides marched into the hospital and demanded to see whoever was in charge. When he arrived the colonel drew his pistol and said, 'If an empty ward is not available in ten minutes, I will personally shoot you and your staff.'

The superintendent turned and within ten minutes we were bedded down in our own ward.

It took a while but Sal and I gradually became stronger and we wanted to get back to Holland as soon as possible.

We had to wait for transport, so while we slept and ate at the hospital, we were able to move about the town freely. And that was something to savour.

Finally a transport train was due to leave for Holland.

It was explained to us, that it would not be all that comfortable, but we would be provided with food and drink, we would not be cramped, and there would be frequent stops.

We left next day for Holland, and seeing the destruction and havoc that the war had caused, I realised I was not the only one to suffer.

We arrived at the Dutch border late in the afternoon. This was the first train with prisoners and forced labourers to return to Holland. As soon as we reached the border, long rows of people waving the Dutch flag and singing the national anthem, gave us an unforgettable welcome.

In the centre of city of Eindhoven a hall had been converted into a reception centre, and we had to present our Displaced Person cards, which we had been given before leaving Germany.

Inspections were stringent as the authorities were well aware that unwanted persons might try to sneak in under cover of being prisoners.

When the news of the truth of the concentration camps was made known to the Dutch people, they opened their homes and took in anyone who was without shelter. A kindly couple, Mr and Mrs Vroegop, took me into their home and treated me with kindness. For the first time in two years, I had a really hot bath, and went to bed with clean sheets and a pillow.

Everyday I went to the information centre to inquire about my relatives and regularly went through the list of survivors.

One morning a lady from the information centre came to the home where I was staying to personally tell me that a Betty Lissing, nee Wynschenk, had been reported as a survivor, and had entered the country through the reception centre at Enschede. This town was approximately 120 kilometres north of Eindhoven, and at that stage impossible to reach. There was no transport and three large rivers to cross. I thought that perhaps Betty might go to Amsterdam.

One day, having been informed that a truck would try to get through to Amsterdam, I said goodbye to the Vroegop family and was on my way.

When we arrived at the railway centre in the city, we were surrounded by hundreds of people all shouting the names of their relatives. As yet they had not heard the terrible truth which would soon become known to them.

Not one of the thirty survivors on the truck had the heart to tell them what had happened to over 100,000 Jews from Amsterdam.

4. The fourth part of the document discusses the implications of the findings. It suggests that the results have significant implications for the field of study and may lead to further research in this area.

5. The fifth part of the document concludes the study. It summarizes the key findings and provides a final statement on the importance of the research. The authors express their gratitude to the funding agency and the participants.

6. The sixth part of the document includes a list of references. It cites the works of other researchers in the field, providing a context for the current study. The references are listed in alphabetical order.

7. The seventh part of the document includes a list of appendices. It contains additional information that supports the main text, such as raw data and detailed calculations. The appendices are labeled with letters and numbers.

8. The eighth part of the document includes a list of figures. It contains a series of graphs and charts that illustrate the data presented in the text. The figures are labeled with letters and numbers.

9. The ninth part of the document includes a list of tables. It contains a series of tables that present the data in a structured format. The tables are labeled with letters and numbers.

I had an uncle in Amsterdam, who had married a Christian lady. I rang from the station and heard my uncle's very excited voice on the phone. I ran to one of the drivers and begged him to take me to my uncle's home not far from where we were.

After the initial emotional greetings, my first question was, 'Have you heard from Betty.'

Yes, she was in a rest home, a converted castle near Ommen. She was very ill, and in no condition to be moved. I decided I would go to Ommen, which was on the other side of the country, even if I had to walk.

A few days later on a borrowed bicycle, I started on my journey to Ommen. I kept a steady pace, and in the afternoon I reached the city of Utrecht. I realised it would take me three or four days to reach my destination, and I was still in a weakened state. I stowed the bicycle in a safe place from where it could later be recovered.

I started to thumb rides and by next afternoon I had reached the town of Zwolle which was only about 20 kilometres from Ommen. There was, however, a 100 metres fast flowing river between me and Betty. I tried to find a way across without success.

It was all very frustrating. I had survived the hell of Auschwitz, yet a single river crossing prevented me from seeing my beloved wife again.

Just when I started to contemplate the possibility of swimming across, I saw a police launch berthing a little way from me. I yelled at the policeman behind the wheel to listen to me. When I explained my mission, and where I had come from, he took me on board and made an extra crossing, for which I will be forever grateful.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

AGAINST ALL ODDS - REUNION

The rest of the way was easy. I finished my trip by riding on top of a milk wagon, pulled by an old horse.

Just outside of Ommen I saw a sign *Road to Castle Eerde*.

That was where Betty was being nursed. I walked through the big gates up a large drive and came to a lawn and flower beds, and people resting on beds and stretchers.

I walked up the steps of the large castle like building and as I entered the hall a woman approached me. I told her my name and that I had been told my wife was here. She became agitated and said, 'Oh my God, this is a miracle. Your wife is here, and she is very ill, and has no will to live. She does not eat and will not speak to anyone. Now with you here, it is possible that this will change. You cannot go in and catch her unprepared, as the shock might be too much for her.'

She took me by the hand, led me to an adjoining building.

She left me in the hall and told me to wait till she came to get me.

That is how Betty and I were reunited. We had survived the brutality, the gas chamber, the starvation and thirst, the snow and ice. Not even all the murderous intent which was the evil platform of the Nazi regime, could prevent our destinies from being fulfilled.

Having found each other, we had reasons for living. I was taken in as a patient, so I could be near Betty and look after her, and in return I did odd jobs around the place.

Time passed quickly and the good care and tranquil surroundings greatly assisted in Betty's recovery. About four weeks after my arrival in Ommen, we had another wonderful surprise.

Without any previous warning, my brother Samuel arrived at Castle Erde.

He had arrived in Holland via Brussels. That was the reason there was no knowledge of his survival in Holland. In Amsterdam he had gone immediately to see our uncle, found out where we were and came to join us. We began to feel like a family again.

Time passed rapidly and while we all thoroughly enjoyed the loving care bestowed on us by the matron and the staff, we wanted to get back to a normal living routine.

I had started to travel to and from Amsterdam regularly, transport was slowly getting back to normal, and when I was offered a job to play the piano in a well known club/bar in the centre of Amsterdam, I accepted so that I could start to build a new future.

Meanwhile, Betty had recovered sufficiently to be moved to a regular hospital in Leiden, where she would receive expert treatment for tuberculosis.

It would be another three months before Betty came home, during which time she had a miraculous recovery from tuberculosis.

I started to look for a place to live, to be able to receive Betty in style when she would come out of hospital. After weeks of looking I was lucky enough to find an apartment in the southern part of Amsterdam. Visiting the club where I played the piano, were many Americans.

Money had lost its value and would soon be replaced by a completely new currency. Cigarettes were the single most important trading commodity. The Americans who came to the club, tipped me in cartons of cigarettes. Being a non-smoker, I was able to exchange them for goods, and so furnished our apartment.

In January 1946, Betty came home, and I was a proud husband, giving my wife a home to live in, for the first time since our marriage in April 1942.

To continue our story, here is Betty again.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

HOME TO AMSTERDAM

Because Herman's work kept him out at night, I was very much alone, still weak and still under medical supervision.

I began to have terrible nightmares, in which the conditions I had lived through returned to haunt me. While asleep, I had no control over my traumas. I could not suppress the horrors of the past years. Time and again, I found myself back in Auschwitz, always in front of the crematorium, waiting to enter. I would wake paralysed by fear.

What I found most difficult to cope with, was the knowledge that the people I loved so much were killed. I knew all the details of their deaths, and it was an excruciating realisation that could not be erased from my mind.

I had to learn to live with that, and this is something every survivor has to cope with.

My family doctor made regular visits to monitor my condition, but there was little he could do to ease the grieving process.

When my physical condition improved, the doctor who had looked after me since I was a little girl, suggested that, even at a high risk, I should have a baby. And so I became pregnant, knowing quite well the risk I would be taking.

When I was three months pregnant, my doctor gave me permission to visit my cousin, Rebecca, in Brussels.

Her husband Jo, her brother Leo, and her father had escaped to Spain. From there Jo and Leo got to England and joined the Free Dutch Army, which helped to liberate the western European countries.

Rebecca had to inform her menfolk that her mother had been gassed at Auschwitz. Although overjoyed at her survival, she was very ill with tuberculosis just like me. She also needed bed rest and good food in order to heal.

When I arrived at her home, I found her in bed.

I said, 'I have a surprise for you. I am three months' pregnant.'

Rebecca answered, 'Wonderful! Now I have a surprise for you, too. I am also three months' pregnant.'

We looked at each other and shared our joy. Our babies were due on the same day. Later Rebecca found that she was expecting twins. Her babies were born five weeks prematurely - a boy and a girl. Unfortunately, the little boy died after just three weeks. In those days, facilities for premature babies were not good. Her daughter lived and now has a family of her own.

We have kept in close touch all these years. We talk about family matters, never of the past. Rebecca has found it difficult to review her Auschwitz ordeals and prefers to let go by wiping them out of her consciousness.

I can understand that. We each have to deal with our survival in our own way.

With my strong maternal instinct, I had a relatively trouble free nine months. On the first day of November 1946, I gave birth to a healthy 4 kilo baby boy, Martin Louis. Both Herman and I were overjoyed. Our lost families were represented in this new life, and it helped us immensely.

Becoming a mother gave me the will to live but the nightmares continued. I wept constantly for my family, especially for my mother.

In the meantime, the American soldiers were slowly being transferred to Germany as occupational forces, and the Netherlands Army again took over the command of the country. Entertainment of the occupational forces eased down, and there was a reduction in work for entertainers and musicians.

When Martin was one year old, Herman was called up again by the Royal Dutch Air Force, because Holland was involved in a conflict in the Dutch East Indies. Herman's job was to help recruit new personnel.

He spent one year at the flying base at Ypenburg in the Netherlands. He was then relieved of active duty because of his war captivity, but he remained on the Air Force Reserve list until 1959.

It was difficult for Herman to adjust once more to civilian life. We still felt very unsettled, especially with our haunting memories. Although we had a home and an adorable son and the inexpressible comfort of our joint survival, we could not find peace. We would walk the streets, and look at the houses where our families had lived.

All survivors of the Holocaust in the Netherlands were still in a state of shock. They had to pick up their lives again, but in most cases, there was no-one left to share them with.

People in general were not interested in listening to our gruesome stories. They themselves had suffered grievous losses and deprivation at the hands of the Nazis who occupied their country.

Apart from that life in Amsterdam was not easy. The city had been completely looted and was devoid of everything. The Netherlands was still reeling from the effect of the war years, and the process of picking up the post-war life was very slow and painful.

It became obvious to us that we could not rid ourselves of the painful remembrances of our once happy family circle, that no longer existed.

I remember walking in the streets of Amsterdam, where I had spent my early happy years, almost expecting to bump into someone I had known before the war. But few of them had returned.

It was all more than we could bear.

We began to think of leaving Europe behind us to start a new life.

Herman started to make enquiries, first at the American Consulate. As an ex-serviceman he would have no trouble being accepted as an immigrant.

However, stateless refugees had first priority. It would take years before we became eligible. After all, we had a good homeland and lived in a democracy.

One day we met a friend who had been a sea captain during the war years. He had been stationed in Sydney and was full of praise for Australia. He had plans to settle in Australia permanently, and convinced us that this was the place to go. It was a land that needed young people like us, and would welcome us with open arms.

We discussed the possibility, and Herman sought an appointment with the Australian Embassy in The Hague.

He was told we could get a permit to go if we could pay our own fares. Because he was an ex-serviceman, we had priority.

Before we left Holland, we received official death notices of the murdered members of our families.

The notices stated exact particulars of the place and date of each death. This information was gathered by the Dutch War Office, and is recorded in the archives of the Dutch Remembrance Committee.

I was particularly broken-hearted when I found that Maurits, my brother, had died on March 20, 1945, just a few weeks before the war's end.

During the post-war years in Holland, I had again joined my old gymnastic club, Bato. It took a very long time to get back in form, but in 1948 I again took part in competitions in Amsterdam, and won second prize in the championships.

The club held a memorial service for all our lost members. At the ceremony I was asked to carry the flag in their memory.

Both Herman and I had learned the importance of keeping our bodies fit.

Herman was a champion runner, and belonged to a well-known athletic club.

We passed our interest in sport on to our children.

A few weeks after our application, we received confirmation of our acceptance as Australian migrants. We would be able to start a new life in a new land.

PART TWO

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

ARRIVAL IN AUSTRALIA

The decision to leave our homeland was made, so that we could begin a new life with Martin, our three year old son.

At that time there was no official government policy assisting immigrants to come to Australia.

When we applied at the Australian Embassy in the Hague, we were told that Herman would have to go to Australia first, so that he could produce a certificate of accommodation for Martin and me.

In September, 1949, Herman, having paid our fares, left by ship to go to Sydney. After his arrival he searched for and found suitable accommodation and was able to produce the necessary certificate.

On December 16, the same year, Martin and I left Holland on the SS Volendam for Sydney. On January 26, Australia Day, we berthed in Melbourne, the last port of call for the ship.

Herman was waiting for us at Port Phillip Bay, where we disembarked. The next day we travelled by train to Sydney. Herman had found a room with a kitchen in the suburb of Rushcutters Bay.

After six weeks we found a small apartment in the same neighbourhood, and settled down to a new life.

Herman found a job in a big city store, and often acted as interpreter, because of his knowledge of languages. He also played the piano at night to supplement our income, as most of it went on the very high rent.

I enrolled Martin in kindergarten, where he soon learned English. I also found English easy to learn, and in a very short time was able to do the shopping by myself.

We suppressed our memories as much as possible, and found the Australian way of life very suitable to our need for freedom from our traumas. The nightmares did not stop, but we carried on as we wanted to present a balanced and peaceful life for our son.

At the end of our first year in Sydney, a friend who worked for immigration, asked us if we would like to appear on ABC radio, for an interview to represent new Australians, celebrating their first Christmas in Australia. This was to be used in the King's Christmas message broadcast from the BBC in London.

Our interview here in Sydney with Keith Smith was taped and sent to London. On Christmas Day, the worldwide broadcast of the message of the King, and of ourselves, was introduced by the actor Robert Donat.

The next day Herman, Martin and myself appeared on the front pages of most newspapers as the 'The Ideal Migrant Family.'

Adjoining our small flat was a park and beach, and I found it relaxing to sit by the water and watch Martin playing. It was a relief to find myself in unfamiliar surroundings, so that I did not have the haunting memories of places where I

had spent my childhood with family and friends. Had I stayed in Amsterdam, I would have been unable to let go of my pre-war happy and carefree life, and would have found it impossible to start anew.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

NEW FRIENDS AND OLD FRIENDS

We made new friends and joined a group of people that were former Dutch nationals. They held a dance every Sunday night in a restaurant called *The Black Tulip*, where Herman played the piano.

One Sunday night, while I was seated at a table with some friends, the door opened and in walked a middle aged couple. I looked at the man, and felt I knew him, but could not place him. He looked at me, and his mouth started to tremble.

He stretched out his arms and ran towards me.

'Betty,' he called out, 'My God, you made it.'

Bram Cohen worked a big press machine in the Union munitions factory at Auschwitz.

Men and women were not allowed to talk to each other, but as soon as Bram found out that I came from Holland, he often put an extra dish of soup under my machine to supplement my meagre meal. Bram's wife and four children were killed as soon as they arrived in Auschwitz. He knew that if ever he survived the ordeal he would be left alone.

The last time I had seen Bram was at the side of a snow covered road, when we had been evacuated from Auschwitz on January 18, 1945. The Russians were advancing into Germany in pursuit of the German army. When the columns of male prisoners passed us, we had to retreat to the side of the road to allow the men to pass. I sat covered in deep snow, but as usual I called out, 'Are there any Dutchmen?'

'Yes,' said Bram and Sam Lissing my brother-in-law.

Bram was totally overcome when in 1951, he saw me sitting at the table in that restaurant. He told me. 'I never thought I would ever see you again.'

He had remarried after the war, his wife was also a war widow, and she was so surprised to see her husband become so emotional. She told me she thought he had discovered a lost daughter.

Bram recently died at the age of ninety-four and the minister, at the funeral service, related this incident. He said that of the countless thousands of people on that death march, Bram and myself were destined to survive and meet again in freedom and peace.

The next few years passed peacefully, and we started to recover to a certain extent.

Martin continually asked us why he did not have a brother, so when he was six years old, our second son, Jerry was born in 1953. (His given name was actually Jack Monty, Jack after my father and Monty for General Montgomery whom we greatly admired).

We were very content. We felt the children represented a close link with our lost families. Our sons gave us the strength to carry on.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

ANNE FRANK

It was in 1955 that I had a relapse. It was as if the floodgates were opened and all the past memories came pouring back, and I faced the enormous loss I had suffered by the slaughter of my beloved parents, brothers and close friends.

Whatever I had tried to suppress of the pain and turmoil of the war years, could no longer remain hidden, and I found it difficult to function normally.

I battled within myself to find some balance in my life and the reason for having survived the death camps. A dear Dutch friend, who had just returned from a visit to Holland, gave me *The Dairy of Anne Frank* to read. It had just been published in the Netherlands, under the title of *The Attic*.

As I read the book, I became very inspired by Anne's description of events that took place in the hiding place, and her need to express her feelings about the ordeal.

The courage and faith that developed within her, gave me the strength to carry on. Reading about her desire to live on after the war, to tell people about why and how she was forced to hide and live under these circumstances, prompted me to relate her story in a series of lectures to high-school students.

Anne is the symbol of the one and half million children who perished during the Holocaust.

Despite the horror of what was happening and what her fate would be if caught by the Nazis, Anne still felt that in his inner most being, Man is really good.

She dreamed of the Brotherhood of Man and knew that one day that had to be experienced on earth.

Her indomitable spirit still teaches people to be tolerant and to become aware of the innate good that is within a person's being when he is in tune with his life force.

The inspiration I derived from Anne's dairy soothed my bruised soul and I found the courage to proceed with my life.

However the next few years were difficult ones. The nightmares did not cease, and I found myself dreaming of the horrendous experiences I had gone through.

During my waking hours I could control my emotions, but when asleep they seemed to take over.

I knew and was determined to overcome this pattern, as I held to the idea that I must not allow those monstrous Nazis the power to destroy my survival. It was then that I embraced the motto, 'Carry on, regardless.'

To this day that is what I practise. I know from experience that when I feel as if I have reached the limit of endurance, I reach really deeply into my consciousness, and from this source I draw an infinite flow of strength. This enables me to continue to face my sometimes insurmountable problems.

In absolute silence the problems often dissolve.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

ELINDA

When I was expecting my third child, I was in poor physical condition, as I was still trying to get through the period of reliving the ordeal of the war years.

When told that the daughter I had so much wanted was born with Down's Syndrome, the shock stunned me.

Medical opinion was that the baby was so handicapped that she was not expected to live, and could not be looked after at home.

I had always been able to find a way to solve my problems, but this time I could do nothing about the situation. There appeared to be no care available to help me look after the baby at home.

The limit of my endurance had been reached, and I felt I could not go on.

The longing for my parents became unbearable. If only I could have felt their arms around me and the reassurance of their loving concern for my grief in this insurmountable problem.

Herman could not face the situation at all, and did not even want me to go and visit Elinda.

She was placed in a nursery for infants born with abnormalities.

I was told she could not possibly survive as her general condition was critical. I stayed in bed and cried for a week. One day I decided to get up and take hold of myself.

With that decision a calmness came over me, and I found the strength to carry on.

No one could stop me from seeing Elinda at the nursery. I was only able to visit her twice a week, those were the hospital rules. The staff were rather hostile and could not understand why on earth I wanted to preserve her life that seemed so fragile and weak. Even Herman found it impossible to accept my determination, but to me this child had great significance.

To me, it was as if this little flame of life had emerged from the ashes of Auschwitz, and I had to nurture that flame and keep it burning until I could bring her home. I knew that once I had Elinda with me, love would do more for her and keep her alive, for love is life's great healing agent.

In the meantime I was called to the nursery often, whenever it was thought that Elinda would die. A number of times I was asked for funeral arrangements, but I always felt assured she would live and come home.

What was so inspiring was that during the ordeal a whole new dimension opened up to my awareness. I became silent within and concentrated on guidance. From where that guidance was supposed to come I did not know. There was no help from outside, and no support to lean on. But a calm steadiness took over, and I felt a joy and reassurance that I had not experienced before.

The thought of God did not enter my mind. It all seemed too abstract, too intangible and too vague to hold on to. If there was a God I did not know Him, and I certainly had no conscious wish to know Him.

Yet I felt within myself a steadiness and a 'something.' Such an experience cannot be conveyed in words, but when it takes place you know beyond doubt that it is an overwhelming feeling of protection. You are strengthened and a joyful energy fills your being. You will never feel quite the same again.

I remember thinking, how strange, I never knew anything about such an experience.

But blissfully it carries you forth. You have no choice but to go along for the ride, as I always tell those who are seeking for an answer to fill the void within.

I needed that inner strength because from all sides I was being discouraged from having so much hope.

Our two sons were excited at the prospect of bringing the baby home. To them it was natural that she should be with us. They kept asking, 'When is our sister coming to live with us.' They thought she was beautiful. Such is love in action.

Whenever I visited Elinda, the matron seemed to take delight in showing me the worst cases of deformities, as if to discourage my efforts. But nothing could deter me from my conviction that Elinda would live and bring a meaningful purpose to my life.

I searched the world for information on any research on retardation. I was led to a clinic in Switzerland that could provide a treatment that would improve Elinda's condition.

The treatment, in the form of injections, was given by my own doctor. This annoyed matron, but that did not worry me.

At thirteen months Elinda was not able to sit up. Five weeks after receiving the treatment she was able to sit up. Five weeks after that, she stood up in her cot, and clapped her hands when she saw me.

Matron said, 'It does not mean anything.'

I said nothing but I felt great joy, because Elinda started to know me.

Despite the continuing lack of support the 'something' that poured itself through me, also gave me the courage to proceed.

At this stage this inner life revealed itself more and more. I became aware of the beloved presence of my family hovering around me. I discovered that they had not really perished but came forth to comfort me in my time of need. Their bodies had died, not their spirit. I felt I could not speak about it to anyone, as it could not be understood.

Until I had this experience, I would not have believed anyone telling me this. So I remained silent, but steadily carried on with my efforts to help my daughter.

When Elinda was 18 months old, Herman and I were allowed to take her out for the day, as by now she had become rather lively to deal with.

When we brought her back to the nursery at night, we found the matron in a drug induced state.

Suddenly, out of the blue, Herman decided to take the baby home to live with us. To me this was a real miracle, as Herman had thought that having Elinda at home would adversely affect the boys.

But taking Elinda home was the first step in uniting us as a whole family.

The situation was still difficult for Herman to cope with, as he had emotional problems with his war experiences as well.

It was a lone passage for me, but one that had to be fulfilled. I could only go forward. Old friends dropped away, but I made new friends, who sensed my inner joys and pains, and at the same time I found comfort in their encouragement.

Slowly Herman became more involved with Elinda. It was wonderful to see the love that she had brought with her take hold in Herman. Gradually he became very loving toward and protective of her.

One morning he came to me and said, 'I have just written a poem. Do you like it?'

This is what he wrote:

**'A sun as bright as gold
A sky full of blue and light,
Can feel as chilly cold
And look as dark as night.**

**For in the human mind
It sometimes may appear,
That all is lost and all's despair
With relief and help nowhere near.**

**Yet in the deepest darkness
It is that hope is born,
And understanding and compassion
Bring light that seemed forlorn.**

**That like a new born baby
Emerging from its mother's womb,
The sun begins to shine again
And rises from its "tomb."**

**That life again takes meaning
And fears start to disappear,
Skies are becoming blue again
And a feeling of new life is here.**

**Only then it is said with honesty
That anyone can say,
I really have lived my life in full
Although I have travelled far away.**

**And now I am contented and happy
Come what may,
For this, dear God, I thank Thee
For this, I humbly pray.'**

(By Elinda's father)

CHAPTER NINETEEN

THE DAIRY OF ANNE FRANK - THE PLAY

When the play, *The Diary of Anne Frank* opened in Sydney, I was invited to present the actress who portrayed Anne with flowers in commemoration of the victims of the Holocaust.

I was interviewed on radio and for newspaper articles.

I was greatly inspired by Anne's diary and seemed to feel her indomitable spirit around me.

I understood so well the period of her inner growth, which had been accelerated through her forced exile in the confinement of a small room. It seems that such conditions often bring forth our truest and deepest feelings.

When I came home after the play I sat down and felt her very near.

I could do nothing else but express on paper what I felt, which I am sure one can understand after reading the following:

'I have just come back from seeing the stage play of *The Diary of Anne Frank*. I am amazed at how well I know Anne. I can almost feel her spirit and I feel sure that Anne is helping me.

Her diary gave me a different outlook on life, and has also helped me in the struggle to accept life and its complications.

Whatever happened to Anne's diary had a unique meaning. And her life and death had a very special purpose to fulfil.

Her father, Otto Frank, who was the oldest member of their family, did return from the death camps.

I feel it was meant to be this way. He was the one who had to spread her message amongst people, so that her spirit could go on living and inspire other people. It was her father who could carry out this work for her, because he understood Anne so well. It was also Otto Frank, who was spiritually strong enough to have gone through the agony of having lost his family and still go on living.

I feel Anne is guiding her father and giving him the strength to bear all the suffering and at the same time educate people to have tolerance for each other.

I really believe that all this was meant to be.

I strongly feel that pain becomes bearable after you realise there is a purpose for suffering.

And I know what pain is. I don't mean the pain when you hurt yourself, but the pain of losing your loved ones.

This is a different sort of pain altogether.

It is then that the soul is hurt, and this hurt never vanishes, but stays with you for the rest of your life. Then you have to learn to live with this hurt and this is not easy.

It is at this time that you need support from God very badly, because if alone, you lose yourself, and start to pity yourself, as I used to do, until I found that I stood not alone.

Then slowly this sort of pain becomes bearable, and you realise there is still beauty left in life.

So you pick up the shattered remains, and begin again with hope in your heart for your children and their children.

You feel that all is not lost and that as long as you live, all your dear ones will live with you. As you grow inwardly, you begin to realise that in death it is only the body that dies. The spirit of the person remains with you. The people you were close to before death took them will remain with you and guide you in all important matters.'

When I wrote to Anne's father, I related to him how her diary had helped me and how close I felt to that inspirational story.

What Anne brought out in her diary was that, in spite of all the hate and destruction she was faced with, she could still feel the reality of good in people.

We can so often learn from the very young.

Otto Frank was very moved to hear how much Anne's dairy meant to me, and how much it had helped me in the mastering of my own life. He was very touched that after the sufferings of the war years, I had been faced with the realisation that my little girl had been born with Down's Syndrome.

He said that what appeared to be a tragedy, instead had led me to a deeper insight in life.

He said that part of my letter reminded him of a special prayer that was conducted in the synagogue. It reads as follows:

'Let us think of those whom we loved, those who have been taken from us, and gone to their eternal rest. May everything good that they have done, everything beautiful that they have said, be recognised at its full worth, and may we take it as a guiding principle from which we shape our lives. For thus the living can honour the dead and remain united with them in spirit.

May those who mourn herein, find comfort and draw from it the power of faith in a world inspiring omnipotence, and the immortality of Life.'

It is obvious to me how much one individual can influence the world in a positive and uplifting way. The impact that Anne's vision of hope and goodwill has had in the world is a well known fact.

World wide, education systems use *The Diary of Anne Frank* to teach about her view of humanity, even though she was only 15 when she died in the Belsen concentration camp, in March 1945. It was just one month before liberation.

By leaving her diary behind when captured by the Gestapo, she left a counter scenario.

Although she perished in Bergen-Belsen, her spirit remains alive to teach and educate people the world over. That is what she had hoped to achieve and of course she did succeed.

CHAPTER TWENTY

ELINDA (CONTINUED)

In 1969 I took Elinda to a clinic in Switzerland for more treatment. It was not that I was expecting a cure, or that I denied a condition known as Down's Syndrome. What I could not accept was that anything could be termed hopeless.

This became clearer to me as the awareness of an inner life experience was guiding me, and providing the necessary means to fulfil Its plan for me during this earthly journey.

I have learnt that we all have a purpose in life. The very pain we experience through our daily life, through our unhappiness and failures, can be turned around, when we discover that we are not really alone in our struggles.

We do have inner companions with whom we can connect, and so receive the guidance we need on how to proceed with our lives.

We often meet the people we need to help us along, and discover books that inspire us and help to expand our conscious awareness to a more fulfilling life. And it is a joy to meet along the way people like you and me, who are longing for peace and harmony.

So the journey to Switzerland was made to give Elinda a better chance of expressing her purpose in life.

The Swiss treatment consisted of injections of live cells of the organs and tissues of foetuses of sheep specially bred for that purpose. The pioneer of this therapy was a very eminent professor, Paul Niehans. He worked on the theory that these

cells would activate the under-developed organs of the recipient. His work was based on decades of research in the rejuvenation of organs and tissues.

Many famous people, the whole world over, had received his treatment, which the professor claimed helped to delay the adverse consequences of aging.

This same treatment could improve the quality of life for Down's Syndrome children.

I am grateful that I was successful in obtaining this treatment for Elinda. When Elinda was ten years' old, I was invited to go to the Niehans Clinic in Montreux, Switzerland.

Although the Professor was by now in his eighties, he had just retired from active practice and had trained specialists to continue his work. I was privileged to be invited to the Professor's home in Vevy. He sent his limousine and chauffeur to the Clinic to bring me to his home. We spent a number of hours talking about his research and struggles to have his treatment recognised by the medical establishment.

It was the most memorable event in Elinda's treatments. He gave me a lot of information about the results of his treatment on Down's Syndrome children. Later when a book was published about the Professor's life and work, I found there was a chapter on Elinda and me.

When I returned to Sydney, I handed many of the Professor's clinical reports to an eminent endocrinologist in Sydney. When the time came for Elinda to have

further treatment this professor volunteered to administer the injection to her, and without charge.

What a blessing that I found someone willing to listen and learn from something innovative in medical treatment.

I am forever grateful that Elinda has never been deprived of anything that could help her to further develop.

While in Switzerland, I took the opportunity to meet Otto Frank. He was so touched by Elinda's condition that he provided her with a specially trained person to be present when we visited his home. He did not want Elinda to become bored when we talked about the diary, and its influence in the world.

Otto and his lovely wife Fritzi, had made a warm and loving home together, and they made us feel so welcome.

Before I left Australia with Elinda in 1969, I told Otto Frank when I would be in Switzerland. We arranged to meet at his home to Birsfilden near Basle. He seemed very pleased that we would meet, as we had corresponded for a long time. After Elinda's treatment at the Montreux Clinic was completed, we were driven to Birsfilden.

We stayed at a hotel near Otto Frank's home. His second wife, Fritzi, was also a survivor of Auschwitz. She had lost her husband and only son during the Holocaust, but survived together with her only daughter Eva. Fritzi and Otto had a lot in common and they understood each other's grief.

We discussed Otto's surprise at the depth of his daughter's diary, and its incredible effect on humanity. Letters were still pouring in from all over the world.

The diary, he said, had come so close to being destroyed but had miraculously been saved. After the Frank family had been arrested, the diary was found on the floor of their attic by office girls, who kept it in a drawer where they worked. They did not read its contents, as it was private, and they hoped Anne would return to claim it. Had they read the diary they would have been compelled to destroy it for their own safety. It proved that they had been helping those in hiding. For this crime the girls would have been severely punished by imprisonment and possibly death.

Otto gave me some of Anne's writings other than the diary. These were short stories, which I treasure to this day.

We took some photographs, and then Fritzi prepared a lovely lunch for all of us.

It was an unforgettable day. When we finally left Otto kissed us goodbye, took out a big handkerchief and waved until we were out of sight. It remains one of my most treasured memories.

I found Otto Frank to be a dignified and true gentleman, with no hate in his heart.

He asked me to keep in touch, and let him know Elinda was benefiting from her latest treatment. We continued our correspondence until Otto passed away in August, 1980 at the age of ninety-one.

He had fulfilled his mission to bring Anne's diary to the attention of the world.

I kept in touch with Fritzi for a long time. At the age of ninety-one she left her Swiss home to live with her daughter and family in London.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

MEETING ROGER CLIMPSON

It is so amazing how Anne Frank continued to influence my life.

In 1984, *The Dairy of Anne Frank* was presented on stage again. Roger Climpson took the role of Anne's father.

Herman and I were invited to a performance and to meet the cast.

I showed them all the information I had received from Otto Frank, letters, articles and pictures, and left them all with Roger.

A few weeks later, he and his wife Claire came to the house to return the papers. Herman showed Roger the story that he had just finished writing about his own war experiences. At the back of the manuscript was a chapter about Elinda coming into our household.

Roger was so touched with that chapter, that he asked us if he could write her story. Both Herman and I agreed.

Roger then found it necessary to come to the house on a regular basis, to tape on his cassette recorder the interviews with both of us. In that way he had a clear picture of everything that had happened since the birth of Elinda.

Before this happened, Herman and I found it very difficult to discuss Elinda's condition, as we had very different views on what had taken place.

At first, talking to Roger was painful for both of us, as we had never really examined each other's point of view. Everything had to be aired, so that Roger understood the whole situation as it had unfolded from the very beginning.

By the time the book was finished, it had been a real healing experience for both of us. We had carried the burdens around for a long time and were careful not to bring up our different outlooks, so as to avoid arguments.

Roger had a wonderful perception of the story and he understood both our points of view. In the process, the burdens were lifted from Herman and I, and harmony was established.

The book, *Elinda* was published in 1987, by Hodder & Staughton, Sydney.

I am ever grateful to Roger for writing such an accurate and inspiring story of the purpose of Elinda's coming into our lives.

I still receive cards and letters from people who have a child like Elinda. They write that they have found encouragement through the book *Elinda* and do not feel as isolated as before.

Many households fall apart when a handicapped child comes into a family. Usually one of the two partners cannot cope with the added stress.

Today of course, there is a lot more help available for our handicapped children and their parents. When Elinda was born in 1958 no such support existed.

I was looked upon with amazement by the medical profession, who thought I could not accept the limitations of the condition of Down's Syndrome. They were wrong. What I could not accept was their attitude of hopelessness.

I felt that there was a purpose behind this ordeal and I had to work through the situation to the best of my ability.

To me it was challenge, and it was absolutely natural to me to proceed in a positive manner. To see her slowly become aware of her surroundings and begin to recognise her family members was a great joy.

Now Elinda enjoys birthdays and family gatherings, and always loves the attention she gets when developing new skills. She has a great sense of pride when she succeeds.

It proves that children who may be intellectually disabled still have normal human responses. My intuition which recognised that fact was totally justified.

Since Herman is no longer with us, Elinda is good company and provides me, as always, with a sense of purpose.

God, indeed, works in mysterious ways.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

SPIRITUAL CHAPTER

Because of the trials and tribulations I have suffered in my life, I became even more receptive to an inner guidance. When Elinda was born with her condition, I needed to find the means to cope with life's traumas. I had to find out what life was about and most of all, the purpose behind our existence.

The gradual unfolding of consciousness opened up a whole new avenue in which I was led to study and read books that would widen my horizons into a search for knowledge and a more purposeful life.

I needed to know what was happening to me, when biblical passages were revealed to me from within. These stories came alive and clarified themselves.

At first this was startling, as I had no knowledge of these subjects, and no interest in them.

I found in my search, that the prophets of old had tried to convey the same message to humanity so many centuries ago.

We usually reach out for knowledge only when life's problems seem insurmountable, and we have nothing else to cling to in order to sustain ourselves in balance and harmony.

In most cases we don't reach out for truth as long as we get by with our daily routine, until life becomes unsatisfactory and we find no answer to our problems.

All my tribulations had brought me to the fringe of endurance, but it was the birth of Elinda that pushed me to surrender into that 'presence' that is infinite by nature.

As human beings we are limited by our concepts. In the learning process of my expanding awareness, there were periods of great joy and wonder. Here was a part of my life about which I had known nothing.

For a while it was like living in two worlds, an inner universe of peace and harmony, and my every day existence with the necessary ups and downs of daily living.

One thing I knew. My feet must be firmly grounded and I had to live a balanced life in order to function practically. However, I was guided in whatever was needed to be done to help Elinda live and bring her to her full potential. I was steadfast in bringing that about.

In my studies I have become aware that the prophets of old tried to convey to people, that in living our lives attuned to inner resources, we would live in greater harmony and peace with our fellow human beings and ourselves.

As the inner meaning of their spiritual passages unfolded in my consciousness, life took on a new challenge as I began to practice what I was learning from this deeper dimension.

There was a sense of peace with me almost constantly, and I learned to trust this higher source to lead the way.

I learned also that it is literally true to 'let the Presence go before me to make the crooked places straight.'

Whatever the prophets of old had tried to teach humanity, it was universal and applicable to all men. There is no division in spiritual creation. God has no theology. Religions are primarily concepts made by man to dominate people. There seems very little love and grace involved.

In our innermost beings lie our spiritual resources, in which we carry our complete pattern of creation and our Divine heritage for a fruitful life on earth. This is coded within, but with most of us, it lies dormant until that moment of readiness, when we learn to reach out for it.

We then will discover that our true Self contains the essence of pure creation that underlies all effect. This source contains no religious labels or divisions. It is a vibrant living substance knowing its own destiny and forming its own pattern in which like begets like.

Without man's interference it is perfect and eternal.

Mankind had divided humanity into different garments and creeds.

Humanhood evolved when we accepted two powers, good and evil. (*Who told you that you were naked?*)

In some religions this is termed the Fall of Man, which really means the acceptance of the sense of creation as the only reality.

Instead we must realise that the 'pattern shown thee on the mount' is the blueprint of eternal creation. This we all carry in individual consciousness, and it is our birthright. Man has been given dominion over his affairs. Our ignorance of these facts keep us from its benefits.

Instead we devise religions, build places of worship, develop sects, and all these chaotic divisions bring hatred, conflict, wars and push people to the brink of their own destruction.

I do acknowledge that our roots are in the pure essence of creation. This must be acknowledged by each individual.

We must let the false concepts of life dissolve, so that the reality of Creation can be experienced.

Only then can we reach that state of fulfilment that was intended for us on earth. Life is a journey in consciousness that must be undertaken individually. We must free ourselves of the conditioned mind that has for centuries believed that there are either superior or inferior races on earth established by our Creator. All this man made nonsense was not meant to be.

Every soul on earth has its place and is a link in Creation that would otherwise be incomplete.

Only when we have learnt the lessons of tolerance and equality will we bring forth the Brotherhood of Man, in which the lamb and the lion will be at peace together.

The greatest blessing I have received during my life's journey is the inner assurance that life is eternal.

What is termed 'death' is merely the end of the physical journey. We continue on to express our existence on a different level of life.

This is a natural process of unfolding consciousness.

We leave our physical body behind. We have no use for that vehicle on the next stage of our journey. Our enduring consciousness produces the vehicle we require for the next experience.

There is an all-knowing Creator at work. We cannot interfere with the harmony of His eternal plan, which includes the sanctity of human life. This means that no man has the right to take the life of another individual. Each individual is unique and each of us is needed to complete the infinite circle of Creation.

Unless we respect life on earth unconditionally, we must return until we learn to do so.

Only then are we motivated to serve the Universe.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

LIVING WITH MEMORIES

Our two sons were growing up and we had every reason to be proud of them.

Martin and Jerry made friends easily, and both were prefects at high school.

They were both sports minded, just as Herman and I had been. They played golf and tennis. Martin also played soccer, and represented Australia with his high-school team in 1962-64, and also later on with his club team.

Jerry was also a good soccer player, and coached soccer teams.

Herman being a keen fan, never missed a game, and it gave him a healthy outlet for his inner struggles. Whenever possible he took Elinda with him to watch her brothers playing. To this day Elinda loves ball games. Jerry became a recreational officer with the Ministry of Sport, and worked for six years at the University of New South Wales in this profession. Martin became a successful businessman. It made us feel wonderful to see the boys so balanced and down to earth.

Elinda was enrolled in a kindergarten of the Windgap Special School, and went to Windgap Activity Centre, where she still attends daily.

Between our three children there is a continuing close and loving relationship.

Herman still could not bear to talk about the horrors of his past, and we seldom talked about these experiences openly with each other.

The thawing out process was especially painful for Herman, because as an artist he was very sensitive and really craved harmony.

I don't think he could bear to think about the cruelties inflicted upon his family, friends and others. He became more and more involved with Elinda and that helped to divert his mind away from the traumas.

He would not go on holiday without taking Elinda, and when we travelled overseas she always came with us. As for me, I became aware that I had to learn to survive my memories in order to carry on.

If it had not been for Elinda coming into my life, I would not have found the means to draw on my inner resources for strength and in the process learn about the meaning of life. I became aware how difficult it is for most people to find a reason for some of their problems and still continue on their journey in everyday living.

The boys were now young men. Martin met Leonie, and not long after they became engaged. They married a year later. Our first grandchild, Nicole Claire, was born four years later.

The joy Herman and I felt as grandparents was very special, and we were overcome with gratitude. When their second child, Nathan David, was born, Martin and Leonie felt their family was complete.

Who would have thought Herman and I would live to experience (KNOW) such joy. We had again established a family circle.

By this time Jerry had met his future wife, Ingeborg, and after a short engagement they married.

We now had two lovely daughters-in-law, and the added joy of two more grandchildren, Daniel Aaron and Tamara Michelle.

To watch the children grow and develop is a continuing blessing. This was all part of establishing a family clan once more, something that brought forth healing to us both.

We never took these events for granted. We had been too close to being wiped off the earth.

As time went on we continued our family get-togethers and each Friday night we had the traditional family dinner at our home.

That was the link I kept with the past, as we all felt the special meaning of celebrating the Sabbath meal and give thanks for the love and joy that brought us together as a whole family once more.

I particularly remember, when I was in the darkness of despair during the war years, that the thought of our joyful family celebrations gave me strength. The family life I once had was like a shield of protection around me. No one could take that part of my life away from me.

I reflected often on the incredible journey I had to undertake in this lifetime. I naturally became occupied with the philosophies of life and attended lectures and courses on the subject as often as I could. I am an avid reader, but mostly I live by my own intuition, and that led to having people turn to me, who were beset by their own problems.

I know only too well, the value of helping wherever I can. There were many times when I myself really needed a helping hand to lift me out of my sorrows, and it was not available. Most of the time, I had to struggle on my own.

I cannot help reflecting on what is happening in the world today and often wonder if the world really learned anything from all the past horrors.

However, within me is the optimistic flame that compels me to be positive on the final outcome of good for the world. That is its destiny. And fortunately that is in the hand of God, and not dependent on evil doers.

It is imperative that we must be alert to recognise that we are responsible for our actions and conduct towards our fellow human beings. We are accountable for our deeds.

It is useless to hide behind a facade of ignorance and blame other influences to excuse the cruelties we inflict on our fellow human beings.

The fact that the Nazi regime concocted the plan for the total annihilation of the Jewish people of Europe is beyond doubt. The sad truth is that they found the willing masses to carry out their evil intentions. Without that assistance their plans could not have been realised. That should not be forgotten.

These murderous crimes were frequently committed by educated people - doctors, teachers, lawyers, judges, generals. That makes their crimes even more hideous, for they offended civilisation and of course their professions.

That is what fooled many of their victims.

These creatures appeared under a civilised title, but their conduct was beastly and without mercy.

Any form of race discrimination is evil, as there is a purpose in God's creation for every individual. Otherwise they would not be on earth.

I feel that children particularly need to be educated about our common heritage, so that the feelings of division can be rooted out, before they take hold in the minds of children. It cannot always be left to parents to point this out. Most people have grown up with the influence of discrimination as the norm of the day, and find it rather natural to behave in this way.

One of the reasons that the survivors of the Holocaust have to remind people of those horrors, is because for centuries the Jewish people have been victimised by prejudice and blamed for whatever was wrong in society.

Even at Auschwitz I remember many victims saying, 'Well if this means being God's chosen people, it is about time someone else was chosen.'

No one can float to heaven on the back of someone else, nor get there by denigrating other people.

We might as well accept that fact.

By trying to destroy others we destroy ourselves. It is a principle we have not yet learned here on earth. We still have war, and these have never resolved our conflicts.

Enduring peace is not established by going to war, but by recognising the equality of all men on earth.

In our inner most being we share the One Consciousness and our basic needs are the same.

I feel that the diversity of races, colours and nationalities, on this earth plane, is created for the lessons of tolerance and understanding, until we have accepted and learned the inclusion of all God's creatures.

I have witnessed the most unbearable degradations that man can inflict on other human beings. I have also witnessed among the many victims, the beauty and divinity of the human soul, refusing to become like beasts in the field, unyielding to tormentors. Their spirits were not broken.

To remain alive in Auschwitz took every ounce of endurance and strength that one could muster.

I have, of course, haunting memories of prisoners who knew that their time was up, as they had been 'selected ' to go to the gas chamber that very day. They looked at us and said, 'You will tell the world what took place here.'

Of course we did not think that anyone of us would survive to tell the tale. We promised anyway, that we would do just that.

In 1995, half a century later, a unique opportunity came for me to honour that promise. I received a telephone call from a survivor friend. She asked if I wanted to participate in a project set up by Steven Spielberg, the director of *Schindler's List*, for a film about the Holocaust.

Working with survivors of the Holocaust had affected him deeply. He wanted to do something to perpetuate eyewitness accounts of the victims of the Holocaust.

Spielberg set up a foundation that would video interviews with survivors about their individual experiences. This would be a permanent record to be used in educational and historic projects to teach future generations the truth about the Holocaust.

I agreed to take part, and was interviewed for over three hours on video. A copy of the tape was later sent on to me.

2. It then goes on to describe the various methods used to collect and analyze data, including interviews, surveys, and focus groups.

3. The next section details the results of the research, showing how the data was used to identify key trends and patterns.

4. Finally, the document concludes with a series of recommendations for future research and for the implementation of the findings.

5. The overall goal of the study was to provide a comprehensive overview of the current state of the field and to identify areas for further investigation.

6. The research was conducted over a period of six months, during which time a large amount of data was collected and analyzed.

7. The findings of the study are presented in a clear and concise manner, making it easy for readers to understand the results and the implications of the research.

8. The document is well-organized and easy to read, with a clear flow of information from the introduction to the conclusion.

It was a rewarding task, because my testimony was now recorded for all time. For many survivors this interview was a healing process. It was, and still is, difficult for survivors to relate the specific details of their concentration camp terrors and torment. After their interviews they felt a great sense of release.

In my innermost being I embrace my companions who lost their lives during the Holocaust. I feel a close bond with all those who had to take that journey through the Valley of Death.

As I think of the incredible madness of the Nazi mind, I recall an incident that stood out for its perversity.

One Sunday, we were told we would not have to go to work that day.

During the afternoon we were pushed out of our hut and ordered to line up in rows of five. We then had to march to a hut further along in the camp.

We were tense and in anticipation of what would happen to us.

We filed into the hut and there was the camp music squad assembled. We stood in rows of five, waiting, and suddenly the orchestra started to play.

The contrast of music and horror was so incredibly painful, that many women burst into tears. At the side of the camp the crematorium was burning, and a few yards away the orchestra was playing!

It was heartbreaking, that is what I remember of it, and I was so relieved when we left the hut.

I recall another morning, coming back to the camp after work at the munitions factory. We were told to remain outside as we had to be seen by the doctors.

A state of panic broke out among the prisoners. What did the SS have in mind this time?

We had to comply, orders were given at gunpoint.

We marched on and filed one by one past the doctors and prisons warders. Each woman received an injection in the arm.

You can imagine the tense waiting to see who among us would remain alive. So often this was a method of execution. To this day I don't know what was injected into my arm.

Yet I struggled on day by day.

It was early June 1944, when a transport arrived from Holland, at the Auschwitz camp.

When I heard about it, I set out to smuggle myself into the quarantine block, so that I could speak to the young women who had just come. They were full of optimism.

They said that the Allies had landed in Europe on the 6th of June.

I said nothing.

The transports from Hungary had just started to arrive. The lines of people waiting to go into the gas chambers, were endless. I later heard that from July 1944 to October of that year, between 450,000-500,000 Hungarian Jews were eliminated.

We lived in a haze of smoke and dust from the burning of corpses.

SS Colonel Eichmann was the instigator of this carnage. He was relentless in his pursuit of his iniquitous *Final Solution*

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Eichmann was kidnapped from Argentina, in 1960, and taken to Israel, where he was put on trial for his crimes.

His defence was: 'I acted under orders.'

After a long and fair trial, he was found guilty and hanged in 1962.

When in the autumn of 1944 the Union squad was moved from Birkenau to Auschwitz women's camp, sanitary conditions improved for us to a certain extent. The barracks were clean and conditions inside were more comfortable.

Also we were not close to the railroad where we could see prisoners arriving from the occupied countries, before being driven to the crematorium.

There was also in this camp the barrack where medical experiments were carried out on women. They were sometimes out in the courtyard, behind barbed wire, walking around. Among them I discovered a number of women that I had known from Amsterdam, and from my gymnastic club.

As long as the experiments lasted, these women were kept in reasonably clean conditions, but they suffered agony while the experiments were carried out. Their lives were in a state of constant suspense, as many died in that barrack.

In the first half of January 1945, rumours started to filter into the camp, that the Russians were moving closer to our region.

In the distance we could hear the canon fire, but we also knew that the Germans would never let us be liberated.

On the day we were to be evacuated from Auschwitz, I was called out by the Kapo of our block.

She said, 'Someone wants to see you at the gate. You will go with a warder.'

I could not imagine what it was about but had no say in the matter.

When we arrived at the gate, on the other side stood a prisoner with a guard at his side. When looking closer, I saw he was a political non-Jewish inmate, by the name of Marius van der Sluys.

He had belonged to the Resistance group, *Geusen* (Giants) in the Netherlands. He had been denounced and had been sent to the most notorious camps in the

area. He spoke to me in Dutch and said, 'We will be marching out tonight. All I could find for you is a packet of honey. Remain at the head of the group. They won't leave you behind if you can't walk. Stragglers will be shot. I know because I have already been on a march, from Warsaw to Auschwitz. Be strong and keep going. Good luck.'

Our little group of women lived on that packet of honey for a number of days. The advice given probably helped to save our lives.

It was in 1947 that I received a message from an earlier gallant saviour, Jo Panke, our Resistance friend who had helped us to reach Belgium.

He had heard that Herman and I had both survived the camps and wanted to visit us to tell us what happened after his arrest. We were also told that he was not well and needed to say Goodbye.

When he arrived at our home, he was on crutches and supported by his priest. We were shocked to see him in such a debilitated state. We barely recognised him, for his face was misshapen and swollen.

We both cried.

So did he.

Then he told us his story. It was shortly before I had been arrested, that Jo had been denounced by people we both knew. Jo had helped so many people escape, and these people denounced him after they themselves had been arrested.

Jo was tortured and beaten so viciously that he was near death. He was put into a concentration camp at Vucht in the Netherlands and expected to be shot. However, the camp was in the southern part of Holland and liberated by the Allies in 1944. Jo was freed , but very close to death.

He was hospitalised. It was discovered that he had developed cancer of the face, as a result of extreme beatings. When he was told the truth about his diagnosis, he sought us out to say Goodbye.

He died a short time later.

After the war, the people who had denounced him were imprisoned by the Belgian government. Herman and I attended their trial to give evidence against them.

What inspired us over the years was the knowledge that there were people like Jo Panke, who had stepped forward and courageously defied the evil doers. We had the great good fortune to meet such people.

I endlessly salute those brave souls. They made our life's journey lighter.

There is no clear-cut answer to the question, 'Why did you survive when so many did not?'

Of course, destiny had to provide witnesses, so that the truth could be reported to the world.

Some people seem to think that the Holocaust should be forgotten and put aside. That would of course forfeit the purpose of the development of civilisation. As long as there is bestiality in the mind of man, it will have to be exposed. It cannot remain hidden. We must deal with it, so that there is no room left for deception. We cannot remain ignorant of the evil of which men are capable. That is all part of our learning experiences.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

HERMAN

Almost imperceptibly, Herman's health began to deteriorate. He did not want to draw attention to his ill-health, but when his breathing became difficult we had often to rush him to the Emergency Department of the Prince of Wales Hospital.

He finally consulted a cardiologist, who put him through a series of tests. It was discovered that he had a leaking heart valve. The specialist thought that Herman must have suffered some infection during his imprisonment. Of course, the infection was never treated in the camps, where the only cure for illness was death.

Herman was put on medication for his condition. He was told an operation would eventually be essential, and a replacement heart valve would be inserted.

By 1990 it had become obvious that he could wait no longer, and Herman underwent an operation to repair his heart. He never really recovered from that operation. His other organs started to fail, but he never gave way to gloom.

Three weeks before he passed on, he suddenly said to me, 'Well, I think this is it.'

On August 4th, 1991, he passed away at St. Luke's Hospital. It was the same place where Elinda had been born on June 25th, 1958. August 4th was also the day when the Frank family had been arrested in 1944.

The day before Herman died, I was sitting by his bedside at the hospital with Jerry, our son. Herman suddenly sat up without saying a word. He looked at

me rather sadly and embraced me. He held onto me for a while, before he lay down and closed his eyes. I thought, 'Oh, Herman, you are saying Goodbye.'

The next day he passed away peacefully.

The last few months of his life, Herman often reflected on his survival. What gave him satisfaction was that Hitler had not succeeded in entirely wiping his family from the earth. he was grateful that his family line could live on through his children and grandchildren. That had given his survival meaning.

I often look around at his many paintings which fill our home. I am grateful that he found a way of expressing the creativity of his soul.

He often said, 'Through my music and art, I have been blessed with the opportunity to connect with the beauty of life again.'

Herman's passing was difficult for Elinda to accept. At first she did not cope very well, and frequently cried. She was very attached to her father, and suddenly he was not in her life any more. I found it hard to explain to her what had happened and hoped time would take care of the situation for her.

I would like to mention one incident that occurred one year before Herman left us. For a number of years, Elinda refused to speak outside the house. We tried all we could to encourage her to speak, but it was to no avail.

Shortly after Herman's operation he was in intensive care. I went to get Elinda from school to visit her dad. On the way to the hospital I said to her, 'Elinda, when you see Daddy, please say "Hello Daddy" in a loud voice. That would make him very happy.'

I gave it no further thought, but when we entered his hospital room, Elinda suddenly called out loudly, 'Hello Daddy. I am Elinda.'

Even though Herman was only semi-conscious, he smiled broadly in delight. From that day, Elinda has spoken normally wherever she goes. Her refusal to speak outside the house dissolved that day.

I am very grateful that Herman was able to experience that joy before he passed on. Elinda's silence had distressed him, as he felt she was capable of speech in any situation. Later Herman said to me, 'If it took my illness to make her speak in public, it was worth it.'

It took Elinda one whole year to adjust to life without her father. She has now accepted his absence, and when she is asked, 'Where is Daddy?' she answers, 'Daddy is with God.'

We all miss Herman very much, but we know he is at peace. Elinda is healthy and has improved generally. We continue our lives together, in the midst of a loving and supportive family.

JERRY'S RECOLLECTIONS

One of my earliest memories as a child was sitting on my mother's lap and looking at some strange blue numbers written on her arm.

I remember asking mum what they were. She told me they were her old telephone number, and that satisfied me, at least for a while.

My recollections of early childhood were generally that of a happy carefree life with Mum, Dad and big brother Martin. I recall with great clarity the news that mum was going to have a baby and how happy we all were. Fun filled days in Maroubra, going to the soccer, the excitement of getting our first TV!

Mum did get very ill while she was pregnant and I remember her crying a lot. I thought it must be because she was ill yet there was something more.

Dad worked long hours and I waited for the somehow comforting smell of tobacco from his pipe or cigar as he came up the front path. He was a great dad and loved us but he was, I guess restless, not quite happy.

When Elinda our sister was born, Martin and I found out she was very sick and couldn't come home for a while. I did perceive at that time that my mother somehow gained an inner strength and a quiet determination. Why? I didn't know but it somehow made it seem alright. There were times when the hushed tense conversation of my parents in a language I couldn't quite understand, made it seem as though they were hiding something - a secret we weren't

supposed to know about.

I never spoke about it to my brother or parents as I felt they were, in their way, protecting us.

As I grew older I noticed my mother was writing a lot. As she sat at the kitchen table, I joined her and asked her what it was about. Ever so slowly I learned that I didn't have grandparents because they were "killed in the war". I found out that bad things happened to the Jewish people and that my parents were somehow involved.

It was a gradual revelation that I learned through conversations with my friends that were also children of survivors, television and snippets of hushed conversations that Jews were put in camps and killed by the Nazis.

I appreciated the fact that whenever I asked my parents a question they answered me in a way I could understand. They never dramatised or became uncontrollably emotional. The careful and loving way in which the stories of their lives and our family that perished were unfolded to us made these horrible events somehow seem an integral part of our family story. As unnatural and horrific as these events were they set me personally on a path that I am still journeying on. I don't know where it's going but I am drawn to a destination that is somehow linked to my family's past. It is manifesting itself as a duty and perhaps a mission that I haven't yet fulfilled.

My own wife and family are more precious to me as a result of my parent's experiences. We were meant to be together. I have a bond with my brother and sister that is very strong. I feel very close to them and love who they are. My sister is much more than meets the eye. She is a whole person and a blessing that helped my parents focus on their future and made all of us more compassionate.

I really didn't feel any great sense of loss until I got to know my extended family through my parents. My loving upbringing, friends and sports have helped me enjoy my life and cope with the memories transferred to me by stories and photos.

I am happy my father found inner peace in his last years and faced his demons within and conquered them.

My mother has given me more than I can express. Her gift of purpose and compassion for others I endeavor to bring into every facet of my life and I will pass this, as a legacy from our beloved family, to my children.

A FINAL WORD

It was not long after my liberation from the death camp, I started to write down events that had taken place in Auschwitz and similar camps.

With many survivors the painful memories about their experiences lie buried within their consciousness and are often too traumatic to recall.

It is difficult to put on paper the details of life in Auschwitz.

How can one describe the astonishing shock when on entering the camp I found that people were gassed and buried in the ovens at Auschwitz.

Their crime was being born Jewish. You become aware that all those people you love and cherish and shared your life with have been eliminated by that process.

The struggle for personal survival begins as soon as you enter the camp.

There is no time to absorb the horrors because you realise you may not be alive one hour from the present.

No prisoner that entered Auschwitz was prepared for the bestiality, the murderous regime practised in this destruction camp. One simply could not fathom, that the human species could embody such evil.

The SS had taken on the lowest denomination of life on Earth and that is what they represented. They had no capacity for mercy in their system and took delight in killing babies and elderly people who were defenceless. As a matter of

fact, murdering people was their favourite pastime and their training was centered on that activity. Having experienced the conditions that existed in the various concentration camps it was almost a comfort to know that the people you loved so much died at arrival rather than first being exposed to life inside the camps.

To me, that was a shocking realisation, but that is the truth as I see it. Herman felt the same way, because we have both known so many prisoners, who died there, after having been exposed to the cruel camp conditions first. What I have always thought miraculous is that most survivors I know managed to put their life back on track.

The pain remains but the real values about family life and decency have prevailed. When people had returned home again they endeavored to be members of a normal society and instill in their children the values they had known before the tragedy.

Throughout all the trials and tribulations I did not allow the misery of Auschwitz to deprive me of my dignity. If I had survived with my physical body alone, my survival would have been in vain.

I could never forget the girl in Auschwitz who knew she was about to be gassed. She looked me in the face and said, 'Well, good, I know what they are after. They want my life destroyed but I will stay in charge of myself. I was given my life by God and I will surrender my life back to God. They do not possess me.'

2. The second part of the document describes the various methods used to collect and analyze data, including the use of statistical techniques and the application of mathematical models.

4. The fourth part of the document describes the various methods used to collect and analyze data, including the use of statistical techniques and the application of mathematical models.

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8. The eighth part of the document describes the various methods used to collect and analyze data, including the use of statistical techniques and the application of mathematical models.

10. The tenth part of the document describes the various methods used to collect and analyze data, including the use of statistical techniques and the application of mathematical models.

In the final moments of her life on earth she freed herself from the clutches of the Nazi henchmen. She had triumphed above the evil doers. The physical body can be destroyed, but its life belongs to God and continues to live in His light.

The learning process continues and the lessons we have absorbed remain with us. I recall my second day in Auschwitz standing at rollcall and looking out on the snow covered muddy ground. I suddenly saw what appeared to be pieces of wood on the ground of the barracks. After rollcall was over, I got near some of these huts and froze on the spot. These pieces of wood were dead bodies from the women who had died overnight.

This was a regular sight at Auschwitz. At first I was in a state of unbelief. Later I became immune to the situation. Another regular sight was that daily, prisoners threw themselves at the highpowered fence surrounding the campsite. It was instant death for those who could take no more. For some it was a way out of their misery.

Then there were the nights our workcommand walked from the campsite to the munition factory to begin our nightshift work. Many nights there were trucks with naked men passing us by on the way to the gas chambers. They were singing the Hatikvah, the song of hope. These men had been selected during the day to be exterminated that same night, simply to make more room for new arrivals from German occupied countries.

It took all those long years after my liberation from the death camps to write down the full Auschwitz experience as I remembered it. To my beloved companions who perished there, I can honestly say, I have told your story and mine.

I promised you I would but it took some courage to recall the misery. I always knew I had to do it one day while I could still muster the strength for it.

It is a promise fulfilled now.

Somehow there is a meaning to this incredible horror.

In our earthly journey it is impossible to comprehend, but somehow I feel they are at peace.

The lessons to be learned from such a tragedy are for those that stay behind. The perpetrators of these crimes will have to learn their lessons.

We set in motion the cause and its effect is the natural result of the act we carry out. Good rewards itself, evil creates its return. In the end, what we do to others bounces back. This is the law of creation. If we want evil to stop on the earth, we individually have to refuse to express it.

There is no other way. This is Man's responsibility. God has given us our free will to choose. It is the source of the destiny that made us survive that edges us on to reveal to the world the fate of those that did not survive.

I, for one, felt that our ignorance of the capability of evil that exists within certain individuals contributed to the slaughter of millions.

I also know that hate and prejudice are still rampant in the world at large.

As we search in outer space to discover other planets we can inhabit, our number one priority should be to find peace and tolerance here on earth first.

Otherwise, we have not much (little) contribution to make to the universe as a whole. We will not have peace until we have developed a consciousness of Peace.

The material in this book came together over a period of 40 years.

The first ten years after my liberation from the death camps, were spent in a haze of pain and anguish realising the extent and brutality of the Nazi regime. The most excruciating pain was caused by the loss of my beloved family and friends, at the hands of Hitler's henchmen.

I felt bereft beyond belief and crushed by the knowledge of the way in which these people were murdered.

The sadism of the Third Reich, the death camps they established in their zeal for total control, is well documented.

My personal traumas were suppressed as much as possible, but the time spent in these death camps took their toll and resulted in years of nightmares.

Herman, my husband, was unable to come to terms with the horrors experienced and he put a shutter over his memories, so that he could go on living in some form of normalcy. Herman was a gifted artist and musician and he found solace in his painting and music.

It was our Downs' Syndrome daughter, Elinda, who helped to dissolve the barriers.

Our decision to move to Australia was a positive step that enabled us to begin again. Our children provided us with a new lease of life, and hope for the future. It was not always easy to explain to our growing children, the reason why they had no grandparents or extended family in their lives. But we were grateful that we provided them with love and care, and we succeeded in making them respected members of society, without malice or hate for their fellow human beings.

Elinda and I continue to live in a positive way and are forever hopeful that humanity will develop a world in which people find no need to dominate others, and respect the right of an individual to live in peace.

I had been urged for many years to write my story, but I felt that the time was not yet right, and my story incomplete.

Upon waking up one morning, I felt the urge to sit down and write a few pages. I called it *God Cried at Auschwitz*. With it came the whole explanation of why that was so.

I had no preconceived idea about the subject, but the words tumbled forth. I felt a great sense of relief. It was the answer to the burning question that has plagued humanity ever since. Where was God at Auschwitz? When I read it out to my son, Jerry, he said, 'That is the Foreword to your book.'

I had no choice but to write it.

THE END

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